United Nations A/50/PV.22

General Assembly

Official Records

Fiftieth Session

22nd plenary meeting
Friday, 6 October 1995, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Freitas do Amaral ..... (Portugal)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Announcement by the President

The President: I should like to inform members that the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, established by Assembly resolution 49/252 of 14 September 1995, will meet next Monday, 9 October 1995, at 3 p.m. in the Trusteeship Council Chamber. All interested delegations are invited to attend.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: The first speaker this morning is the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Mr. Alfred Nzo, upon whom I now call.

Mr. Nzo (South Africa): Mr. President, I wish to extend to you, on behalf of the South African delegation, my sincere congratulations on your election to the presidency of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. Your election demonstrates the high regard in which the international community holds your country. I should also like to express our deep gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, a brother from Africa and the Foreign Minister of Côte d'Ivoire, who presided over the forty-ninth session with great wisdom. I should also like to express to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, our continued confidence in his guidance of the Organization.

A half century ago representatives from 50 countries met at San Francisco to draft the United Nations Charter, the Declaration of Human Rights and the Statute of the International Court of Justice. For the United Nations to have survived for a period of 50 years in an imperfect world is indeed a milestone and a tribute to the visionary steps taken half a century ago towards the creation of a better world.

South Africa's involvement with the United Nations goes back to the very conception and birth of this illustrious body. The then-Prime Minister of South Africa, Field Marshal J. C. Smuts, helped to draft the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations. In the Preamble many lofty ideas were expressed, among which were the following:

> "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small".

How ironic that those in power in South Africa since then, and until last year, acted in a precisely contrary spirit. The United Nations contributed significantly in bringing about change in South Africa. Through perseverance and commitment, the United

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Nations assisted us in our struggle to achieve democracy. Our reward is its reward. I should like again to express the gratitude of both the people and the Government of South Africa for its foresight and courage.

Just over a year ago, on 23 June 1994 to be precise, I had the honour to address the Assembly on behalf of the people and the Government of the Republic of South Africa. On that occasion, which marked South Africa's resumption of its participation in the work of the General Assembly of the United Nations, we were filled with joy and pride at the peaceful transition of South Africa into a united, non-racial, democratic and non-sexist society.

In the intervening months I have travelled to many countries, visited with many foreign ministers and met with several Heads of State or Government. We spoke of the miracle that is South Africa. We shared our thoughts and experiences on the road to that miracle. In that context, we continue to encourage those who seek change for a better life to stand fast in their belief.

As the representative of a Member of the United Nations, I should like to reassure you of our belief in and support for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the Organization.

The events in April 1994 in South Africa marked a break with the past as well as a commitment to the future, placing a heavy burden on us. As a young democracy, we are ready to meet the challenge. South Africa will meet this challenge with a firm commitment to the promotion of national welfare, prosperity and security, with a firm commitment to the strengthening of cooperation in the pursuit of the economic development and security of the southern African subregion, with an active commitment to peace, stability and good governance within the African region and elsewhere, with a firm commitment to South-South cooperation and with a commitment to responsible international citizenship.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) was conceived in the struggle for freedom in southern Africa and born of the courage of its leaders in setting out to create a new reality.

The liberation of South Africa and the end of southern Africa's destabilization brought great opportunities for the development of our subregion. We must now translate those hopes into reality. In accordance with the Abuja Treaty, we must transform the southern African region into one of the reliable building blocks on which Africa's economic regeneration will be built.

Our greatest need today is to eradicate the scourge of poverty afflicting the great mass of our people. Only then can we fulfil the dream of Africa's liberation in the health, happiness and well-being of its children.

The mission of SADC reflects the reality that southern Africa has long since passed the stage of lamenting the privations of the past. The challenge is to find within ourselves the resources to overcome this legacy, with the cooperation of the international community. We need to adapt to the demands of a rapidly changing world economy and to develop the skills needed to compete internationally.

South Africa's main objective is to play a constructive role in bringing peace and stability to the region. We are totally committed to the utilization of preventive diplomacy, peace-keeping and peacemaking, through the use of regional and multilateral mechanisms.

In this context, South Africa participated with others in the resolution of the conflict in Lesotho and provided logistical support for the elections in Mozambique. Our support for United Nations resolutions and actions regarding Angola and the Western Sahara should also be seen in that light.

As an elected member of the Central Organ of the Conflict Resolution Mechanism of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) from June 1994 to June 1995, we participated in several missions to Burundi. South Africa was part of a special four-member ministerial mission elected to assess the nature and the scope of the Burundi conflict with a view to encouraging and assisting the Burundians to resolve their differences and end that conflict. We continue to participate in the Mechanism as an invited observer.

In view of the desperate situation in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda, it has become imperative for States to cooperate as far as possible with the respective ad hoc criminal tribunals that have been created for those territories. In that regard, my country has made available some of its most talented jurists to assist.

These situations have demonstrated anew the real need for the establishment of a permanent international criminal court. This issue has been revitalized in the past few years, and a window of opportunity now exists to

finally bring the court into existence. It is my sincere hope that significant progress will be made in that regard during this session of the General Assembly.

As we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, mankind is still faced with political instability, dictatorship, corruption, civil war, millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, persistent economic decline and continued impoverishment.

In the past year, the international political climate has experienced a succession of changes which have brought both hope and a certain measure of despair to mankind. Hope has, however, remained a beckoning beacon bringing about a sense of confidence in the future. We were saddened by events in Somalia, but rejoiced at the transition in Haiti and El Salvador. We despair at the tragedy that is Bosnia, yet hope that the emerging signs of a solution will come to fruition.

In this spirit, allow me to congratulate the peoples of Israel and Palestine on having reached yet another landmark in their journey towards a lasting settlement. We encourage and support the Middle East peace process.

The issues of proliferation and disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament, are among the major questions that have been facing the international community in recent times. At the historic 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), all those present agreed to exercise the utmost restraint pending the entry into force of a comprehensive test-ban treaty. We are of the view that the recent tests conducted by two nuclear-weapon States are retrogressive steps in the international community's endeavour to ban nuclear testing. We believe that these tests will negatively affect the outcome of work on a comprehensive test-ban treaty. The South African Government is strongly opposed to these and any further nuclear tests being conducted, and calls upon those States to cease testing, so as to enhance international efforts towards non-proliferation and disarmament. We call upon them to honour both the letter and the spirit of the Principles and Objectives which they agreed to and helped negotiate at the NPT Review and Extension Conference. South Africa has dismantled its nuclear capability. South Africa, for its part, has proven its commitment to nuclear disarmament. Now it is the turn of others to manifest a similar commitment.

South Africa notes with great satisfaction the progress achieved thus far towards the establishment of an African nuclear-weapon-free zone. We have been actively involved in trying to find solutions to the outstanding issues, and we trust that these hurdles can be overcome and the draft treaty of Pelindaba can receive due consideration during this session of the General Assembly. The draft treaty is important as it would expand the non-nuclear-weapon area of the globe considerably and would be a further step towards the final goal of complete nuclear disarmament. South Africa appeals to the nuclear-weapon States to ensure that the draft treaty is concluded and the relevant protocols signed.

Since the 1986 declaration of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic, significant progress has been made in the political, economic, scientific, technical and cultural spheres to further the objectives of the Zone. Only relatively few obstacles remain. We hope to advance this endeavour when the next meeting of participating nations takes place in Cape Town in March 1996.

On 13 September 1995 South Africa became the thirty-seventh State party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. On the same day South Africa also acceded to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. The ratification of the chemical weapons Convention again underlines the commitment of the Government of National Unity to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. South Africa's accession to the Convention on certain conventional weapons underlines my Government's commitment to the elimination of the suffering that is caused by the scourge of war. South Africa has, for this reason, decided to extend its moratorium on the export of land-mines by the introduction of a permanent ban on the export or sale of long-lived anti-personnel land-mines. Furthermore, on 30 August 1995 the Government of National Unity approved the draft of a new conventional-arms-control policy. A National Conventional Arms Control Committee has been established and will function in accordance with predetermined guiding principles and criteria to ensure that arms trade and transfers conform to accepted international practice.

As previously mentioned, the principal role of the United Nations is to safeguard international peace and security in order to implement universal respect for

human rights and to create conditions necessary for sustainable development. Without peace, security and human rights, sustainable development will be difficult to achieve. Without development and respect for human rights, international peace and security will continually be threatened.

As President Mandela stated in 1992,

> "Our common humanity transcends the oceans and all national boundaries. It binds us together in common cause against tyranny, to act together in defence of our very humanity. Let it never be asked of any one of us what we did when we knew that another was oppressed."

Mankind should learn to act against all tyranny in a unified manner through the United Nations. This should be our basic aim for the future.

South Africa also wishes to call attention to the activities of mercenaries, irrespective of their origin and objectives. Their destabilizing activities cannot be tolerated. We call on the international community and the United Nations to be seized of this problem of mercenaries.

The women of South Africa have lived, in varying degrees, under three forms of oppression, relating to race, to class and to gender. One of the first steps towards initiating positive change in the lives of all South African women was the entrenchment of gender rights in our Bill of Rights. It was with much pride that the South African delegation took their seats at the Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing. That was the first time South Africa participated in a conference on women which focused on the eradication of poverty, and equal access to education and to health services. South Africa is fully committed to implementing the Platform for Action adopted at that Conference, which will serve as the impetus for a world of equality, development and peace for all. In addition, our Parliament has most recently approved South Africa's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, without any reservations.

Years of apartheid rule have bequeathed the overwhelming majority black population with a heavy legacy of poverty, social disintegration and political cleavages based on colour and ethnic animosities. It therefore became the priority task of the South African Government of National Unity to devise a national strategy to address this catastrophic situation. A comprehensive and multi-pronged developmental strategy known as the Reconstruction and Development Programme is now being implemented. The implementation of this Programme relies primarily on the mobilization of domestic resources through prioritization of budgetary resources, with a view to addressing the huge material inequalities in such areas as education, health, housing, infrastructure development and land reform. It is a unique people-centred and people-driven Programme, which seeks to translate into economic benefit the political miracle in our country. At the very heart of this Programme is the acknowledgement of the inextricable interdependence between the need for transparent, accountable and democratic governance of our society and the imperative of dynamic economic growth and sustainable development.

South Africa will host the ninth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD IX) from 26 April to 11 May 1996. This is an event which all South Africans are looking forward to with great expectation. Indeed, it is my pleasure to announce that our preparations are well advanced and on course.

We attach great significance to UNCTAD IX for a number of reasons. We believe that the rapid progress of globalization and liberalization of the world economy has underscored the relevance and importance of UNCTAD as a United Nations institution with a strong development mandate and perspective. We also believe that the successful completion of the Uruguay Round of negotiations and the resultant creation of the World Trade Organization not only has stressed the validity and relevance of UNCTAD, but has also reinforced the need to retain and strengthen UNCTAD's mandate as a policy-oriented global intergovernmental forum on trade and development issues. It is a forum where a strong partnership for development between the developed and the developing countries can, and must, be forged. While there may be a need to streamline certain UNCTAD activities, this should not lead to its demise. Without UNCTAD, our world, especially the developing world, would be the poorer.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my Government's satisfaction with the intergovernmental process at the United Nations to draw up a United Nations Agenda for Development. We believe that the United Nations is the appropriate forum for the elaboration of the Agenda for Development. The Agenda for Development could open great possibilities for development and for partnership between the developed

and the developing countries. It is for this reason that South Africa is taking great interest in the work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on an Agenda for Development.

My Government has been following with great interest the ongoing High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Mid-term Global Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries. In this connection, I join others in calling on the international community to devise a global strategy to effectively address the debt question confronting the least developed countries, and to use innovative measures — whether it be official development aid, foreign direct investment or multilateral financial assistance — to arrest the decline of resources destined for the least developed countries.

I would also like to call upon the international community to vigorously pursue measures required to successfully implement the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. We are pleased in that regard by the progress registered during the Economic and Social Council's session in Geneva, especially the high-level segment, which was devoted to the aforementioned Agenda. Of course, the challenge before the international community is to find adequate resources to translate this Agenda into tangible results. It is our hope that this issue will be treated with the required urgency, given that next year there will be a mid-term global review of the New Agenda for the Development of Africa.

Recognizing the importance of cooperation between developing States, South Africa has acceded to an agreement establishing the South Centre. The South Centre will effectively operate as a policy research unit for the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77, and will draft policy-oriented position papers on issues of critical importance to the South. It will, in addition to this basic function, generate ideas and proposals for consideration by Governments of the South and other institutions.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development engendered a process of environmental action and awareness centred on the relationship between economic development and the sustainable management of the environment. It is our duty to carry this process forward in an integrated manner and reconfirm our commitment to the implementation of international agreements which seek to manage and preserve the world's environment.

South Africa is very conscious that the capacity of developing countries to implement sustainable environmental strategies will have to be strengthened. The resources pledged towards the attainment of goals set out in Agenda 21 will have to be made available if we are to succeed in achieving the imperatives of development, sustainable use of the environment, and democracy in the world.

In Africa, in particular, the ravages of drought and the advances of desertification require urgent attention. The global community's concern for the environment should be reflected in a common approach to the manifold environmental pressures threatening our global heritage.

The United Nations also has an important role to play in assisting States threatened by natural or man-made disasters. Preventive diplomacy can contribute towards eliminating man-made disasters. However, the results of both man-made disasters and natural disasters can be ameliorated by effective international humanitarian assistance coordination through the United Nations. This will naturally require more coherent programmed delivery and coordination by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) and other international institutions. The United Nations will have to ensure that the necessary capacities and mechanisms are created. Recent international action, especially the follow-up to the Tokyo Conference, has demonstrated that sufficient international will exists to perform this function.

We welcome the adoption on 14 September 1995 of General Assembly resolution 49/252, on the strengthening of the United Nations. I wish to assure the Assembly of our intention to work constructively with the President in this endeavour.

The world in which we find ourselves today is greatly changed from just 10 years ago. The cold war has ended, the scourge of apartheid has been removed from our common society and peace has come to Mozambique and now Angola. We have also seen the membership of our United Nations increase to 185, a substantial increase since the time the Security Council's membership was last increased. As a result of these, and other, factors the international community faces a window of opportunity

within which the Security Council can be successfully restructured and reformed.

Within the overall effort to reform the United Nations, South Africa believes that the structure and functioning of the Security Council should be reformed to make it more representative, democratic and transparent. The product of these efforts must be a Security Council that is effective and legitimate, and that reflects the realities of our modern world. This result can be achieved only if reform and restructuring is dealt with as a package. One of the products of this reform process must result in Africa having equitable representation on any enlarged Security Council.

It would be appropriate for me to conclude by referring to the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. The people of South Africa will celebrate this fiftieth anniversary in concert with the rest of the world. Our National Committee organizing the events in our country has adopted the following as its Declaration of Intent:

> "To create an awareness among the peoples of South Africa of the role which the United nations can play in their daily lives, and to assist the United Nations in responding to the challenges of the twenty-first century."

President Mandela looks forward to joining his fellow world leaders in a few weeks' time to celebrate the visionary step taken half a century ago towards the creation of a better world. Building on the successes and victories of the past, we now embrace the future. We can face the challenges ahead, inspired by a vision of a new world where peace and respect for human dignity are the standard.

The President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tourism and International Transport of Barbados, Her Excellency Ms. Billie Miller.

Ms. Miller (Barbados): It is my pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of this historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly. The Barbados delegation shares the confidence expressed in your leadership, and offers our full cooperation as you preside over the deliberations of this landmark event.

I also commend your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, not only for his outstanding stewardship of the Assembly during the last year, but for the vision and direction he has given to the ongoing work designed to fashion the United Nations of the twenty-first century.

Let me also take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to a fellow member of small island developing States, the Republic of Palau, whose admission to the United Nations took place in December 1994.

Fifty years ago, the United Nations rose from the ashes of a devastating world war. Understandably, the Organization was shaped and influenced by the experience of that war and by the coalition of Powers that prevailed in 1945. It also grew to reflect the forces underpinning the post-war system of international relations — a system characterized by that paralysis of international political will known as the cold war.

Yet, to its credit, the United Nations has fostered remarkable progress on such vital issues as decolonization, development and human rights, as well as on a wide array of international standards, which we have come to take for granted. Through its extensive network of organs and specialized agencies, the United Nations system has made tangible and lasting improvements in the lives of men, women and children all over the world.

But that old order has come to an end, and we face anew a world of tumultuous global change. Barbados sees this world through the eyes of a member of the small island developing States — joint products of decolonization and the relative geopolitical stability that the United Nations has ensured since our independence. As a group, we have had mixed success in transforming the legacies of colonial tutelage into genuine and sustained development for our peoples.

As small and fragile members of the global community, we are constantly reminded of our own economic and political vulnerability. For us, what happens outside our borders, beyond our control, whether man-made or natural, sometimes has more impact on our way of life than anything we may do at home. One hurricane can wipe out, in a matter of hours, an entire small island economy. Only three weeks ago, Hurricane Luis wrought such devastation on a number of our Caribbean neighbours, causing major set-backs in their economic development. We extend our sincere sympathy to our brothers and sisters at this time of distress. Barbados is cooperating fully with others in helping to restore normal life to these Caribbean Member States.

For small island States, how we recover from disasters such as this, and perhaps more important, how we work towards ensuring that we make ourselves less vulnerable: these are paramount to our survival. Clearly, short-term assistance and the sympathy of the international community, while crucial, are not enough. Small size also means that our entire society, not just areas of it, is equally vulnerable to dislocations of the global economic system, including currency and commodity price fluctuations, new international trading arrangements, and the changing fortunes of the major industrial economies.

Notwithstanding these natural or man-made constraints, many small island States, including my own, have achieved rising per capita incomes and improved human development indicators but such indices provide only an approximate measure of the present, based on the past. They do not, and cannot, measure our vulnerability, the resilience or lack of resilience of our economies and entire societies in the face of natural disasters and rapid global economic change.

It is in this broad context that Barbados has given the highest importance to the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which my country had the honour to host last year. The Programme of Action, adopted by consensus, underscores the role which the stewardship of small island States plays in the preservation of the global commons. We urge international action to step up the support pledged in the Declaration of Barbados and the Programme of Action. My delegation therefore calls for the steady implementation of the commitments and recommendations contained in General Assembly resolution 49/122 of 19 December 1994.

As a small vulnerable State, Barbados views some areas of the global political scene with deep concern. Following the end of the cold war, the people of the world yearn for an era of peace and economic prosperity — but peace, so far, has proved elusive. The outbreak of violence and ethnic strife has reached unspeakable levels of human suffering, taxing the capacity of the United Nations support system to the limit.

In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the large majority of Member States looks on in agony and helplessness at a crisis which has called into question the very credibility of the Organization and the integrity of its peace-keeping function. We recall words of the late Sir Winston Churchill today: But Bosnia has not been the United Nations "finest hour". But let us not forget that the United Nations is no more, no less, than the collective will of the Governments it serves.

For vulnerable small States, United Nations protection is critical. Developing countries, particularly those least able to afford it, bring no influence to bear on major peace-keeping decisions, yet must pay their assessed share of peace-keeping costs, diverting scarce resources from the development effort. Barbados welcomes the encouraging signs which have recently emerged from the peace process between the parties of former Yugoslavia, and hopes that an end could be soon brought to the strife and bloodshed in this war-torn region.

Barbados shares the anguish of the people in the strife-torn countries of Africa, in particular, Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, and in similar areas of conflict around the world, and hopes for early progress towards lasting peace in those areas. At the same time, we welcome the positive developments in the peace process in Angola and that between Israel and Palestine. We hope that a peaceful and durable settlement to the problems elsewhere in the Middle East may soon be reached.

In Haiti, where democracy is beginning to take root, Barbados is proud to have participated in the multilateral initiatives and mission which resulted in the return of Haiti's democratically elected government. The return of President Aristide underscores this continuing success and this continuing process. Haiti is a prime example of a vulnerable small island State receiving, at long last, the support and protection needed from its neighbours and the international community. Much still needs to be done if Haiti's recovery and development, long neglected in the face of political turmoil, are to be assured.

We urge the international community to stay the course with Haiti. We know that progress will be uneven, but we applaud the Government's commitment to the democratic process. Haiti is a Caribbean country with which Barbados shares strong bonds of history and culture. The Haitian people can be assured of our support in their struggle to nurture its fledgling democracy, and improve the economic and social conditions of its people.

Barbados applauded the decision of the United Nations last May when it extended indefinitely, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). But now the spirit of this agreement has become a casualty of recent events. Barbados deeply regrets the decision by some States to resume nuclear testing, which

runs counter to the spirit of the NPT and the commitment by nuclear weapons States to exercise the utmost restraint, pending entry into force of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty. As a small island developing State and a non-nuclear-weapon State, Barbados has a vested interest in the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the disarmament of existing nuclear stockpiles.

Barbados therefore supports the moratorium on the testing of nuclear weapons in place, and urges nuclear Powers to heed the call by the international community to refrain from any activity that violates the spirit of the Treaty. As an island State whose people depend on the sea for a large part of their livelihood, Barbados is gravely concerned about the potential danger to its fragile marine ecosystems. We are therefore implacably opposed to the transshipment of nuclear materials and hazardous wastes through the Caribbean basin.

International terrorism, transnational crime, drug trafficking and money-laundering, are matters of grave global concern, particularly to a small country like Barbados. The destabilizing threat of related cartels to the democratic order in small States is particularly serious. While Barbados has been put on full alert, we recognize our limited capacity to effectively police our own borders. We deeply appreciate the bilateral assistance in this area, and will continue to work closely with other regional partners and related international bodies to combat this global cancer.

The year 1995 is a special one for the United Nations. It is a year for solemn reflection on the mission and achievements of the Organization, and for new directions to meet the challenges ahead.

The world we face is characterized by increasing globalization of production, liberalization of trade, and an explosion of information technology. Increasingly, States find themselves restricted in their capacity to control or influence the flow of international capital, other than by providing hospitable conditions to attract it. Moreover, there is an emerging consensus on the reordering of the role of the State in economic development, in the direct creation of wealth and in the complementary nature of the public and private sectors.

A significant feature of this changed world is the emergence of non-governmental organizations as a major influence in domestic and international public policy. Barbados welcomes this participatory power of civil society, which has deepened and enriched the debate on international issues and helped shape the global agenda to better reflect the popular will.

The framers of the Charter demonstrated this foresight in the Preamble, not with the words "We the Governments", but with the words "We the peoples". And as we approach the new millennium, the slow but sure triumph of peoples over institutions is becoming increasingly evident. An appreciation and analysis of these global changes is critical to a reformed United Nations if it is to meet the challenge of the twenty-first century while remaining faithful to the original ideals of the Charter.

But good governance still is, and always will be, the best instrument for the expression of the popular will. Government is, after all, when exercised responsibly and accountably, a profoundly moral vocation. And just as Governments cannot, domestically, retreat from that moral function of fostering peace and upholding justice and liberty, neither can they do so internationally.

Barbados supports the reform process. A reformed United Nations system should be cost-effective and efficient. The process should be orderly and informed by solid analytical work, with decisions based on rigorous evaluation of the mandates and performance of affected institutions and their relevance to the changing demands of developing countries. In this connection, Barbados believes that the abolition of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development would be premature. Restructuring of these institutions may well be warranted, but due process should first be served.

Reform of the United Nations must not mean an abandonment of international cooperation and a retreat into isolationism by the strong and powerful among us. The growing interdependence on which the welfare of all our people depends makes isolationism an irresponsible fantasy. The problems that beset us — the degradation of the environment, the plight of the poor and the dispossessed, narco-trafficking and money-laundering, human rights abuses, and, especially, ensuring the equal rights of women and children — can be solved only through more intense international cooperation.

Let us by all means streamline this Organization and its allied agencies. Let us make them more effective in the delivery of programmes of direct benefit to our peoples. But let not calls for better management and increased efficiency cloud any lack of resolve by the

more fortunate among us to discharge their international responsibilities, or hamper the Organization's capacity to fulfil the mandates entrusted to it by Member States.

The United Nations has before it a daunting task. It must enlarge the Security Council to better reflect the realities of membership since 1965 as well as the geopolitical changes in the global environment. In particular, it must redesign its peace-keeping machinery to cope with the changing nature of conflicts in today's world — namely, conflicts mainly within nations, not between nations. Barbados supports the structure for such reform contained in "An Agenda for Peace", and salutes the Secretary-General for his distinctive leadership on this crucial issue.

In the economic and social fields, the United Nations must intensify its support to the development effort of developing countries. Barbados supports the framework for an "Agenda for Development", prepared by the Secretary-General. The United Nations now has before it a comprehensive development agenda created by the continuum of United Nations Conferences in New York, in Rio, in Vienna, in Barbados, in Cairo, in Copenhagen and in Beijing. Barbados reaffirms the central role of women in development, which is acknowledged in the respective Programmes of Action of all these Conferences. Women bring their unique perspective to the development process — and without it, the whole is impoverished.

Implementation of these expanded programmes is crucial. They must be carried out with commitment and dispatch. But even with expected improvements in efficiency, these critical tasks cannot be accomplished unless the United Nations system is placed on a sound financial footing. This is why we urge early action to solve the acute financial crisis of the Organization.

All States, big and small, powerful and weak, learn that power must be exercised responsibly. The big and strong have a special role to play in a reformed United Nations, particularly in the maintenance of peace. It is unrealistic not to recognize this. But the small and weak also have their own vital contribution to make. Both must act responsibly and within both the letter and the spirit of international law.

Barbados is confident that Member States can rise to this collective challenge. The machinery is already in place — in particular, the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the strengthening of the United Nations system.

Barbados will participate fully in this historic session. It will work to revitalize and strengthen this unique institution, where humanity's greatest hope for peace, security, development and social justice resides. Together, we can forge a renewed United Nations capable of fulfilling the promise enshrined in "We the peoples".

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Culture, Youth and Sport of the Principality of Liechtenstein, Her Excellency Ms. Andrea Willi.

Ms. Willi (Liechtenstein): I should like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session. At the same time, I wish to thank your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy.

We are meeting this year at a crucial moment in the history of the United Nations. The fiftieth anniversary of the Organization should be an occasion on which to review the first half-century of the United Nations, but also, first and foremost, to prepare the Organization for its future activities and to address the manifold challenges that are ahead of us.

While we commemorate the United Nations fiftieth anniversary, Liechtenstein is celebrating its fifth year of membership in the Organization. When Liechtenstein was admitted to the United Nations, the global situation was undergoing fundamental changes. People around the world hoped that the Organization would be able to work in a comprehensive and more efficient way towards fulfilling the purposes assigned to it under the Charter. Many of these hopes have remained unfulfilled. The optimism that prevailed at the beginning of the post-cold-war era has turned into sometimes heavy criticism and a decreasing confidence in the work of the United Nations. This criticism is not always justified and is sometimes based on a lack of understanding of the functioning of the United Nations or, more often, on a one-sided approach to its activities.

The achievements of the Organization in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance, the promotion and protection of human rights and the strengthening and further development of international law, to name only a few, are unique and undeniable. However, it remains a fact that events of the recent past have undermined the credibility of the United Nations in the eyes of many people, and we have to make every effort to restore and

enhance the confidence of the peoples that we represent. We must only look back in order to make the best use of the experience we have acquired over the past 50 years and to enable the Organization to respond effectively to the new challenges it faces today.

The financial situation of the Organization is beyond any doubt one of the issues that need to be addressed urgently. After many years of serious financial problems, we have reached a stage where the work of the United Nations itself is in jeopardy. Drastic measures had to be taken recently to guarantee the continuation of its daily work. It is of the utmost importance, however, that no measures be taken which affect the nature and the efficiency of United Nations activities, which are urgently needed. The efforts to improve and to monitor the administrative and management capabilities must be continued and further enhanced. All Member States have to pay their assessed contributions fully and on time if a durable solution to the current crisis is to be found. We are confident that the Working Group that you, Mr. President, will be chairing, will produce fruitful results.

The increasing financial burden that peace-keeping operations impose on national budgets must be alleviated. We are of the opinion that a proliferation of peace-keeping operations has to be avoided, and I wish to emphasize that the concept of preventive diplomacy deserves even more attention than it has received until now.

It is obvious that the world has changed. It is also obvious that the challenges for the United Nations have changed. For these reasons, changes have to be made within the Organization in order to enable it to cope with these challenges. We therefore support the efforts to reform, modernize and restructure the United Nations and welcome the process that has been initiated to that effect.

Many people wrongly identify the United Nations only with the activities of and the decisions taken by the Security Council. While we must work together in order to promote understanding and knowledge of other United Nations activities, which are equally important, we also have to understand that issues of international peace and security directly or emotionally affect people all over the world. We therefore have to make every effort to enhance the effectiveness and the credibility of the work of the Council. A limited expansion of the permanent and non-permanent membership and improved working methods, as well as enhanced transparency, would certainly make an important contribution in this respect. As a small country, we follow the activities of the pertinent Working Group with particular interest. We are of the view that the work done so far has been very substantial. However, many of the sensitive questions require further discussions.

Liechtenstein, like many other countries, has to rely on the universal respect for international law. The United Nations has made remarkable contributions to the further development and strengthening of international law. The adoption of new legal instruments in important areas, however, sharply conflicts with continued and sometimes systematic violations of international law, particularly in the field of human rights, and of international humanitarian law. The establishment of the international ad hoc Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda can prove to be an important element in preventing the recurrence of such violations. It is essential that, for the first time since the Tribunals of Nuremberg and of Tokyo, individuals be held responsible for violations of international humanitarian law. We hope that the work of these Tribunals will be effective and will contribute to the early establishment of a permanent international criminal court.

The Liechtenstein Government welcomes the historic decision to make the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) permanent. We have come one step closer to the overall elimination of nuclear weapons, and we express our most fervent hope that the NPT will very soon become universal. We therefore appeal to those States which have not yet ratified the Treaty to do so urgently. We further express our hope that the next step will be the early conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty. Liechtenstein deplores the fact that nuclear tests are still going on and urges all nuclear-weapon States to refrain from any further testing.

One of the most remarkable and uncontested merits of the United Nations in its first 50 years lies in the field of self-determination. While some people seem to think that these activities of the Organization are a closed chapter that belongs to the past, others, including the Government of Liechtenstein, are of the view that the potential of the right to self-determination has not been exhausted and offers possibilities to cope with many conflict situations all over the world. We are convinced that the right to self-determination deserves further discussion and development within the United Nations. Liechtenstein has therefore, within the framework of its national activities for the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary, organized two international conferences this year dedicated to this subject. We hope that we can continue to count on the Organization's interest in this

matter, which is of crucial importance for the fulfilment of its purposes.

The Fourth World Conference on Women, which concluded in Beijing three weeks ago, reaffirmed that the human rights of women and of the girl child are an integral part of universal human rights. The Liechtenstein Government welcomes the fact that the Conference agreed on a wide range of measures to remove the remaining obstacles to women's full and equal participation in all spheres of life. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action contain a comprehensive plan for the international community to promote the status of women, to the ultimate benefit of society as a whole. It gives me pleasure to announce that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has recently been submitted to the Liechtenstein Parliament for approval.

The fiftieth anniversary cannot be an occasion for self-congratulation. However impressive the achievements, however disappointing the failures, one thing is certain: there is no alternative to the United Nations, and all Member States have to work together to make the Organization stronger and more efficient. The Government of Liechtenstein remains committed to this goal.

The President: I now call on the Minister of External Affairs of the Gambia, His Excellency Mr. Baboucarr-Blaise I. Jagne.

Mr. Jagne (Gambia): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your unanimous election as President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session. Our confidence in your stewardship is further strengthened by your distinguished career at home and, indeed, your understanding of international affairs. I should therefore like to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you carry out your important mandate.

I should also like to pay tribute to your illustrious predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, for a job well done. Indeed, he has honoured his country and, by extension, the entire African continent by succeeding in giving the presidency of the General Assembly a new image.

As for the Secretary-General of the Organization, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, we can hardly thank him enough for his work, including the excellent arrangements made for this session, which takes on particular importance this year. The Secretary-General deserves commendation for all his commitment to development, social justice and international peace and security — objectives on the basis of which this Organization was founded.

Having said that, I should like to take this opportunity to welcome the one-hundred-eighty-fifth Member of the United Nations. Palau's recent admission is a true reflection of the universality of the Organization.

It is regrettable, though, that it has not been possible to discuss the readmission of the Republic of China on Taiwan on the basis of the same principle. Considering its population of 21 million and the fact that it is one of the world's leading economies, my delegation sincerely believes that the Republic of China on Taiwan, readmitted as a full Member, would make significant contributions to the work of the United Nations. It is hoped that such a move would also facilitate the process of reunification.

About the same time last year we informed this Assembly of the establishment of an Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council and a new Government in the Gambia, under the chairmanship of His Excellency Captain Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, following the military takeover on 22 July 1994. The factors that compelled the Army to take over the reins of power have already been explained in sufficient detail. Prominent among the reasons was rampant corruption.

In this regard, let me inform the Assembly that the various commissions of inquiry established to probe the activities of the former regime have so far made shocking revelations about the degree of corruption and mismanagement that was the order of the day in the Gambia during the last 30 years. The most devastating revelation of all has been made by the Crude Oil Commission, which uncovered the embezzlement of millions of dollars meant to finance development projects in the country.

Equally breathtaking are the findings of the Commission concerning Government Departments and line Ministries. The work of the Public Assets and Properties Recovery Commission, also chaired by a Superior Court Judge, is progressing steadily. Here again what has been unfolding leaves no reasonable doubt that there was widespread abuse of public office under the previous regime.

Meanwhile, the Commission of Inquiry into Land Administration is currently examining the evidence that it has been gathering since its creation, and it will submit

its report soon. By all accounts, the findings so far of the Commission of Inquiry into the Financial Activities of Public Corporations are also earth-moving.

Strenuous efforts are being made to recover everything stolen. But the important thing is the lesson drawn from all these Commissions, which, basically, is that public office is essentially for the service of one's country, and not to be used as a vehicle for self-enrichment. Even members of the general public are now more responsive to their tax obligations, as evidenced by the record tax collections since the setting up of the Commissions to which I have referred. More important, the principles of accountability, transparency and probity in public life are gradually taking root in Gambian society.

All these facts speak for themselves, and we now understand why the Gambia is poorer today than it was at the time of independence. The country's meagre resources, which should have been utilized for development purposes, were grossly mismanaged — to say the least. This is why not a single hospital or high school had been built after 30 years of independence. It was deliberate policy to keep our people ignorant and, therefore, no serious attempt was made to build a television station or, at least, to improve the national radio station so that it could be heard all over the country.

Can this, in all honesty, be called democracy? And, to perpetuate themselves in power, the authorities of the former regime brought in truck-loads of foreigners to vote for them during elections. In the absence of an independent electoral commission it was easy for them to indulge in such malpractice.

The Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council Government has since adopted a Programme of Rectification and Timetable for Transition to Democratic Constitutional Rule by July 1996. Mindful, however, of the fact that democracy and development are inextricably linked, we have also drawn up a development agenda focusing mainly on the social sectors. The two programmes, contained in one document, were formally submitted to our traditional partners-in-development for assistance. To our great surprise, however, and despite all the hullabaloo over the need to speed up the democratization process, very little or no assistance at all was forthcoming to complement our national efforts.

Despite the fact that the Timetable was reduced from four years to two years after nationwide consultation, the European Union and its allies still maintain sanctions against the Government. None of the efforts made to implement the various activities in the transition Programme have been acknowledged by them. I am referring to the Constitutional Review Commission, the Civic Education Programme, and the Electoral Law Review Committee. Our traditional partners in development all reneged on their promises. This unfounded scepticism has not deterred us from forging ahead with our plans to build a new society. That is why we have decided to finance the operations of some of these activities to demonstrate our commitment to the transition Programme.

Mr. Lamamra (Algeria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

As a serious-minded Government we cannot abdicate our responsibility, or our duty, towards our people. It is for that reason that two high schools and three junior secondary schools are being built. They should be ready within the next few weeks.

Plans are also well under way to build at least a third referral hospital. In addition to the building of schools our national education policy is currently under review with the aim of making education more accessible to all, notably to girls, and tailored to suit our national development objectives. Recently, too, we have embarked on the building of a university. All these efforts clearly demonstrate once more the importance attached to the development of human resources. This, we are convinced, will rescue our people from the darkness of ignorance, illiteracy and deprivation.

In the area of infrastructural development, not only are roads being built, but His Excellency the Chairman of the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council and Head of State recently laid the foundation-stone for the new Banjul International Airport complex. In fact, work has commenced on this project, which is on a turn-key basis.

As agriculture is the backbone of the economy, the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council Government is giving this sector all the attention that it deserves. That is in line with our thinking that a nation that cannot feed itself can hardly be called independent. A hungry nation cannot concentrate on nation-building. Besides, food is used as a weapon.

It is said that the youth of today are the future leaders of tomorrow. Guided by this adage and the

principle of good citizenry, the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council has introduced a National Youth Service Scheme, the basic purpose of which is to inculcate discipline and to reorient the thinking of Gambian youth towards nation-building while harnessing their potential for future adult life. The first group of volunteers will be sworn in in the new year.

It may be said without fear of contradiction that Gambians have now become more aware of their rights and duties and that for the first time in many years they face the future with renewed hope and confidence. On that fateful Friday of 22 July 1994, His Excellency the Chairman of the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council, Captain Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, woke a nation that had been slumbering for 30 years with a new vision to transform the Gambia into a highly developed model country. In this way the Government will have bequeathed to the present and future generations a legacy worthy of all the sacrifices that are being made today.

History teaches us that once in a while at some point in a country's history a visionary leader will emerge with a mission to transform that society for the better. We in the Gambia are fortunate that in the hour of need, His Excellency Captain Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, a soldier with a difference, took centre stage, and now provides the quality of leadership commensurate with the challenges of the times. Since the advent of the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council to power under Chairman Jammeh's guidance we have learned within a short period of time what effective leadership means, and have come to the conclusion that there is no gainsaying that a leadership with vision always has the nation's interests at heart.

Similarly, at the international level when the world's leadership is characterized by statesmen with a vision, the collective interests of mankind always have primacy over other considerations emanating from narrow-minded nationalism. As great minds think alike, and as a bitter lesson had been learned from two world wars, the need was felt to create the United Nations. It is interesting to note that in the Preamble to the Charter we do not find the usual phrases that appear in other international legal instruments, such as "We the contracting parties" but instead we have the words

"We the peoples of the United Nations".

The concept of international solidarity and the unity of the human race immediately come into play with the expressed determination not only

"to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war"

but also

"to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples".

It is in this spirit that my delegation views the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen last March as a significant turning-point in the international community's persistent efforts to improve the quality of life of peoples all over the world. The Summit, including the non-governmental organizations forum, facilitated a broader exchange of views by the international community on social development issues, with emphasis on poverty alleviation, the generation of employment, and health care.

The adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action conveys our collective concern over the world's social ills and indeed the commitment to a concerted effort to find viable solutions to these problems.

Of particular relevance to my delegation are the commitments made by the said forum concerning the socio-economic development of Africa, and of the least-developed countries in particular, and the provision of the necessary financial and other resources. These commitments should serve as the basis for Africa's sustained economic and social development.

The political will and resources necessary for the effective implementation of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development should be demonstrated not only in the full application of the 20/20 initiative but also the channelling of substantial technological, scientific and other resources aimed at achieving our objectives.

The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, which has just ended, highlighted gender equality and gender needs, including the participation of women in the economic and political decision-making process, the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women, adequate recognition and support of the contribution of women to the management of natural resources and the safeguarding of the environment. Indeed, as ably stated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations:

> "The empowerment of women is the empowerment of all humanity!" *(Press Release SG/SM/5732)*

The Platform for Action, which focuses on the role of women in development, should provide important guidelines for realizing the goals that we have set. In the Gambia, women have been playing an indispensable role in national development. Today 4 out of 14 Ministers are women, responsible for important sectors such as health and social welfare, education, youth and sports, and tourism and culture. Our participation in the World Conference with our First Lady as Head of Delegation was inspired by the Government's commitment to women's issues, including gender equality and the encouragement of women to participate in national development.

It goes without saying that women and children constitute the most vulnerable group in society, and we will not be doing justice to our children if we do not renew the commitments made during the World Summit for Children and acknowledge the preponderant role played by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in mapping out strategies for the greater welfare of children all over the world. We in the Gambia have made considerable progress in the implementation of the mid-term decade goals, notably in the area of the Expanded Programme on Immunization.

At this juncture, my delegation would like to pay tribute to the memory of the late James P. Grant, the former Executive Director of UNICEF, for his outstanding performance in increasing international public awareness of the plight of children and his total dedication to the cause of children the world over. It is our fervent hope that the new Executive Director will build on the achievements of her predecessor.

An issue related to the question of women and children is population and development. It will be recalled that at the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in September 1994, far-reaching decisions were taken, as outlined in the Programme of Action that was adopted. What is important here is that what should be done at the national level should be complemented by a concerted international effort, as agreed in Cairo.

The interrelationship between population and the environment cannot be overemphasized. In fact, in the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development, it is stated that

> "Pressure on the environment may result from rapid population growth, distribution and migration, especially in ecologically vulnerable ecosystems. Urbanization and policies that do not recognize the need for rural development also create environmental problems." *(A/CONF.171/13/Rev.1, annex, chapter III, section C, para. 3.26)*

In this regard, it is gratifying to note that following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, it has been possible, under Agenda 21, to successfully conclude the Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa.

In the same vein, we are mindful of the needs of our peoples for better living standards and improvement of the rural and urban environment through the provision of adequate shelter and sustainable human settlements. My delegation therefore anxiously looks forward to the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), to be held in Istanbul, Turkey, in June next year.

All these world conferences on various issues of concern to the international community should be seen as our collective endeavour to give concrete expression to the pledge enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations

> "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

In pursuit of these objectives, we should also be strengthened in our resolve, as also stated in the Charter,

> "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small".

This leads me to recall the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna a few years ago. We in the Gambia have always maintained that human rights should not be viewed only from the narrow perspective of civil and political rights, but also from the perspective of the right to development. In the Gambia, over the last 30 years, we have had the experience of elections being held at regular intervals, but we all know that it was only a facade.

There is no point in overemphasizing civil and political rights in a developing country at the expense of more pressing needs in other areas, such as health, education and agriculture. Before people can think of casting a vote they first of all want to make sure that they have enough food to eat, can send their children to school and have access to health care. In any case, let there be no illusion about this, for democracy cannot flourish under conditions of abject poverty.

The greatest threat to international peace and security today is the ever widening gap between rich and poor. And since we live in a world of interdependence, the North-South dialogue that has been dormant for so long needs to be revived urgently to put the emphasis on the economic development of third world countries.

The President returned to the Chair.

It is true that the world economic situation has registered notable improvements in the economies both of industrialized and of some developing countries. It is to be noted, however, that the various growth rates in different developing countries reflect their limitations and lack of adequate incentives and resources.

The conclusion of the Uruguay Round is expected to generate an increase in merchandise trade of 12 per cent by the year 2005. As far as developing countries are concerned, however, any benefits to be derived from this agreement would depend largely on their accessibility to markets through the removal, of course, of tariff as well as non-tariff barriers.

It is feared, though, that in the case of sub-Saharan Africa any gains from the Uruguay Round will be seriously limited by the low proportion of manufactured goods in its exports. The case is even more serious for least developed countries.

The Economic and Social Council's high-level meeting on the development of Africa within the context of the review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, held from 4 to 6 July 1995 in Geneva, was indeed very timely. None the less, the mapping out of all these strategies for development will have little meaning unless they are matched by the necessary resources to achieve the desired results, especially when the resources generated through structural adjustment are paradoxically diverted to service our debts. And we know that it is indeed an excruciating burden.

All these issues have been adequately addressed in the United Nations Agenda for Development. In the Agenda for Peace, however, there is still the need for greater efforts to find solutions to the various protracted conflicts around the world. There have been a lot of criticisms and reservations pertaining to peace-keeping operations — notably with regard to the huge costs involved — but peace is priceless.

What has happened to the peace dividend, anyway, which was talked about so much during previous sessions of the General Assembly? The head of the Australian delegation made some interesting proposals regarding the financing of peace-keeping operations. There is a lot of sense and merit to what he said, and we should be doing justice to ourselves if these proposals were considered seriously. We must never relent in our collective endeavour to find lasting solutions to all the conflicts besetting the international community, whether in Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi or Afghanistan, to name a few.

In our subregion, we welcome the signing of the Peace Agreement by all the warring factions in the Liberian civil war and the establishment of Council of State to oversee the transition to a democratic, freely elected civilian Government. It is our fervent hope that the cease-fire will hold so that the people of Liberia will once again live in the environment of peace and stability that has been denied them for so long. Let me take this opportunity to commend the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for its timely initiative and persistent endeavour to finally put together this important peace package. This clearly demonstrates that regional arrangements, as stipulated in Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, could play a preponderant role in conflict resolution.

We have been following with great attention the progress made in the Middle East peace process, and my delegation would like to take this opportunity to congratulate both Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on these achievements and to encourage them to maintain the same commitment in the quest for a just and lasting peace.

With regard to the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, my delegation notes with cautious optimism the recent peace deal between the parties concerned. It would not have been possible, however to bring the Serb aggressors to the negotiating table without the limited use of force against them.

The situation in Jammu and Kashmir has also been of concern to my delegation. We therefore urge all the parties to the conflict to try to resolve this long-running dispute through dialogue.

We in the Gambia have always maintained that we will never condone the use of force by a bigger Power to impose its will on a smaller country. I am referring to the lingering problems resulting from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, such as the question of prisoners of war, payment of reparations and, indeed, the return to Kuwait of all properties taken away during the invasion. In short, Iraq should comply with all Security Council resolutions. Meanwhile, though, ways and means should be found to ease the suffering of the innocent Iraqi civilian populations.

Fifty years is a relatively short period in the life of an international organization such as the United Nations, but it has been a period full of important and eventful activities, with successes and setbacks.

For 50 years now the United Nations has been working for global development and the maintenance of international peace and security. Its Charter has become the legal and moral foundation of international relations. Through the United Nations we have witnessed the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the enactment of the Convention on the Law of the Sea, the holding of global conferences on the environment, development, population, children, women, and soon, on human settlements.

The United Nations should be commended primarily for the broader role it played during the cold-war period and for championing the concerns and interests of developing countries. It has always provided a platform where big and small nations meet and discuss issues of common concern.

At this juncture, when we are celebrating the golden jubilee of the United Nations, my delegation believes that the time could not be more propitious to lift the economic blockade against Cuba. This dynamic island nation has made remarkable progress in the area of medicine and genetic engineering, achievements that Cuba would share with the rest of the international community.

As a small developing country confronted with unique challenges, the Gambia is keen to ensure that the ongoing reforms aimed at restructuring and revitalizing the United Nations remain on course. The strengthening of the role of the General Assembly and the office of its President as well as the improvement in the performance of the Secretariat should be commended. Any reform of the United Nations system should emphasize the need for more coordination between agencies and the development of new procedures for the accelerated implementation of programmes and activities.

The challenges facing the United Nations today will continue well into the twenty-first century. In this connection it is imperative to restructure the composition of the Security Council as soon as possible to reflect the realities of today and in that restructuring Africa's interest must be taken into account. In other words, Africa must be represented permanently on the Security Council.

Let me conclude by renewing the Gambia's commitment to the ideals of the United Nations. The Organization is far from being perfect, but, at the same time, we do recognize that it is indispensable, for it is the repository of the hopes and aspirations of mankind.

The President: I now call on the Deputy Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic, His Excellency Mr. José Manuel Trullols.

Mr. Trullols (Dominican Republic) *(interpretation from Spanish):* May I first of all on behalf of the Dominican Republic and on behalf of its Constitutional President, Mr. Joaquín Balaguer, express our sincerest congratulations to the President of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

Secondly, I wish to express our profound gratitude to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, who presided over the forty-ninth session and, particularly, to the Secretary-General, who, by his extraordinary efforts and tireless dedication in a world marked by challenges and breaches of the peace, wages a daily combat for the full implementation of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

The Dominican Republic can affirm with pride on this fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations its role as a founding Member of the United Nations, which signed the San Francisco Charter within the international order that rose from the ashes of the Second World War, whose fiftieth anniversary we also commemorate, and as a country that defends the principle of sovereignty as the inalienable right of the people.

Fifty years after the creation of the United Nations in 1945, the world is in a state of transition toward what has been termed a new world order, moving from bipolarity to unipolarity in a multipolar world, following upon the world built in Yalta and in the Bretton Woods agreements.

The 1945 order was based on a balance of power and on the United Nations as a reflection of the real desire to seek security and universal peace — and the Organization has managed, since its creation, to avert another nuclear holocaust.

Small countries such as the Dominican Republic, staunch guardians of their national sovereignty, have witnessed during the five decades since 1945 this order created through the United Nations and its specialized agencies, with Bretton Woods, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Council for Economic Aid (COMECON), the Warsaw Pact, and the European Economic Community — today the European Union; the evolution of countries with market economies and those with centrally planned economies, and the decolonization processes which have resulted in the establishment of many independent States. All this has left an indelible imprint on the annals of contemporary history and has been rich in lessons for all the nations of the world — lessons, in a word, on relations between North and South.

The order which emerged from Bretton Woods was reflected in the International Monetary Fund (IMF); the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD); and the aborted International Trade Organization of 1947, which was replaced by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), from which the agricultural sector, services and intellectual property were excluded. All this explains why 46 years later, with the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations and the birth, in 1993, of the World Trade Organization (WTO), we are giving multilateral shape to world trade in order to overcome bilateral barriers and, above all, the protectionism that was practised by the industrial countries.

In these five decades, the small countries had to struggle mightily to uphold the principles of democracy, including respect for human rights, and to defend their right to access to the markets of the industrialized countries against tariff and non-tariff barriers, quotas, and downward spiralling in the prices of their raw materials. We can, however, point with pride to the way we fought for our demands for greater symmetry and fairness in commercial and economic relations. This in the end led to the establishment of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The San Francisco Charter illuminated like a powerful beacon the road to the future of the countries that had had to experience the difficult period of the bipolar world. For its part, the Dominican Republic, committed as always to the principles of the Charter, was able to attain the functional democracy we enjoy today. This took place within a world that has some 30 integration processes and has seen the emergence of three strong economic- integration blocs with their spheres of influence — such as the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) — in addition to the Free Trade Zone of the Americas, which will probably be established in the year 2005; and, for Eastern Asia, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (APEC). There are also the political repercussions these processes have had on a world where the dreams for centrally planned economies have faded. Our country is now a member of the recently established Association of Caribbean States (ACS).

This new world order that has now become the global village foreseen by Marshall McLuhan, within a globalized, international economy, will not be without tensions, for we do not yet fully grasp the cultural plurality of nations and the strong search for identity in regions and within ethnic and religious groups. Contrary to the popular phrase, history has not come to an end. A new process is beginning with the expression by peoples and regions of their national identity.

The globalization of trade would seem to transcend the borders of the nation-State and create a concept of a region-State, given the fragmentation of national aggregate assets.

Within the family of nations we feel proud to have been not only one of the 51 States that participated in the San Francisco Conference, but also one of the first to have ratified, in resolution 962 of our National Congress, the Charter of the United Nations, which was promulgated by our Executive Branch on 11 August 1945.

On the fiftieth anniversary of that memorable date we wish to pay tribute to those members of the Dominican delegation who signed that historic document: Manuel Peña Batlle, Emilio García Godoy, Gilberto Sánchez Lustrino, Tulio Franco y Franco and Minerva Bernardino. We are a nation deeply committed to the

proper functioning of democratic institutions, having attained a commendable political stability in our continent's community of nations.

In this context, the United Nations will be making a praiseworthy contribution to the process of maintaining stability in our country by responding to the request of the Dominican Republic for reimbursement of the funds spent in implementing the economic embargo imposed on our neighbour, Haiti. The Dominican Republic has submitted that request to the Secretariat and our Government is now awaiting a response.

As a developing country the Dominican Republic must face many challenges in the sensitive areas of drug trafficking and drug consumption. This is a problem our country has met with a State policy that provides for severe punishments for offences related to this crime against humanity. At the present time legislation is pending in our National Congress to punish money-laundering, which is an activity related to the criminal drug traffic. We are also coordinating our policies with the international community, since in this field more than any other international cooperation is required.

It is fitting here to congratulate the United Nations Secretariat on the successful holding of the Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing. That Conference represents a milestone in the Organization's history because of the recognition it has granted to that noble human being who makes up half of all humanity and is the mother of the other half.

In that connection we would reiterate at this fiftieth session, just as we did at the last session, our concern at the Secretary-General's proposal to merge the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). The General Assembly should recall Economic and Social Council resolution 1979/4 of 9 May 1979, which established the permanent headquarters of the Institute in the Dominican Republic.

We wish to reiterate — with the utmost courtesy, but also with the utmost firmness — our request that INSTRAW and UNIFEM not be merged, maintaining the commitments contained in General Assembly resolution 34/157 of 17 December 1979 and the agreement that established INSTRAW in Santo Domingo so that our first city of America may remain the headquarters of that important Institute. This would also be in keeping with the extraordinary importance of the recently concluded Conference on Women.

We are now only six years from the beginning of the twenty-first century, in the year 2001, and our thoughts turn to an assessment of the past 50 years since the founding of the United Nations. We should also be visualizing the foundations and the shape of the new world order for the building of a future based on security and world peace. This will require a qualitative change in the United Nations, removing the sacrosanct aura surrounding the veto power of the great Powers in the Security Council and promoting a democratic system of coexistence among States and peoples.

The United Nations and we, its Member States, will have to meet the challenge of the demographic or so-called population bomb with growth estimated at 84 million persons per year, and related problems, such as the fact that in 1990 only 40 per cent of the world's population lived in rural sectors and over 50 per cent in urban centres of over 100,000 inhabitants. The number of persons suffering malnutrition is estimated to reach 512 million by the end of the century. Children without schooling will number 315 million, and there will be 889 million illiterate persons. Those living without sanitation systems will reach 1,750 million. Dealing with those problems will be a real challenge.

The new context of the world order will require a three-pronged approach involving an ecological response, a political response and an economic response.

Although the United Nations Environment Programme was an important step forward for the protection of the biosphere, consideration should be given the possibility of creating, after proper study, an ecological response embodied in a United Nations environmental security council composed of Member States with a permanent 15-member executive committee and a secretary-general with executive powers.

The political response would come from the reform of the United Nations Charter. In this connection, we should bear in mind that Article 109 of the Charter, which was written in 1945, provides for the convening of a General Conference within a 10-year period for the purpose of reviewing the Charter. In addition, on 22 April 1991 a number of former Heads of State and political leaders appealed for a renewal of the United Nations. Today, it is appropriate to envisage the inclusion of Germany, Japan and India as members of the Security

Council, as well as the inclusion of representatives of third-world countries.

Charter reform would, of course, imply the exercise of the powers of the Secretary-General supported by under-secretaries for environmental, political and economic affairs.

In addition, the economic response should come from a clear and precise definition of the role of the United Nations within the new order. Since, in the economic sphere, the Group of 7 has already been coordinating its policies through a kind of security council, with the recent addition of Russia, we might envisage its incorporation into the United Nations as a sort of Economic Council that might include, in addition, the countries of southern Asia and the Pacific, as well as Latin America and other regions. It could eventually become a Group of 18, linked to the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the specialized agencies and the regional commissions.

The Dominican Republic hopes that the ideas and suggestions that have been put forward, many now under study and being proposed in various forums, will be viewed as a good-will contribution by a small nation — a nation that is small but proud of its participation in the international community.

For that reason, we cannot, as a small nation that believes in unity within diversity, fail to mention our support for the agenda item — proposed by Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Dominica, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, the Solomon Islands, Nicaragua, Niger, Panama, the Central American Republic, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Swaziland and our country, the Dominican Republic — regarding the special situation of the Republic of China in Taiwan in the international context, based on the principle of universality and in accordance with the established model of parallel representation of divided countries in the United Nations.

The Republic of China on Taiwan, a Founding Member of the United Nations, has a population of 21 million, a high level of economic development and full political democracy. It has been a model to all developing nations. Its aspiration to participate in the United Nations once again is something positive for the international community. The Organization must not ignore its existence. The Dominican Republic supports the establishment of an ad hoc committee to seek a satisfactory resolution of this matter.

At this fiftieth session, the General Assembly should take stock of the achievements of the United Nations in its 50 years of existence as well as of the unfulfilled objectives in the area of the maintenance of international peace and security. But above all it should adopt a vision of the future that will enable us to build a democratic system of coexistence among States and peoples, inspired by the profound human aspiration to lasting peace. May merciful God help us attain these goals.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.

United Nations A/50/PV.23

General Assembly

Fiftieth Session

Official Records

23rd plenary meeting
Friday, 6 October 1995, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Freitas do Amaral . . . . . (Portugal)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis, Mr. Denzil Douglas, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Douglas (Saint Kitts and Nevis): As we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, it is indeed an honour for me to address this distinguished Assembly. I take pride in conveying to it fraternal and cordial greetings from the new Labour Government and the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

The United Nations has made noticeable progress and important strides during the past five decades through sheer determination, assiduity and the unrelenting faith of its Members. This is faith in an Organization that has been able to balance the interests of the weak with those of the strong, faith in our collective will to preserve democracy, promote peace and improve the quality of life for all our peoples. The occasion of the convening of this historic session of the United Nations General Assembly provides an important impetus to galvanize our Governments to reaffirm our commitment to the causes of world peace, international security and development. This faith represents the very essence of what we celebrate not only this year, but every year as well.

Fifty years ago a few men of great courage and vision cast aside national differences to come together to plant new seeds of hope in a future that would one day bear fruit for humankind to enjoy. The historic legacy of cooperation and partnership that triumphed over individualism should burn like an eternal flame in our minds, serving to remind us all that peace, one of the most precious of commodities, is not ours to squander, but merely on loan to us. We have a solemn responsibility to pass it on to future generations. The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis salutes those visionaries of half a century ago and thanks them for the rich legacy bequeathed to us all.

I wish to join other delegations in expressing warmest congratulations and good wishes to you, Sir, our new President, elected to preside over the Assembly in this landmark year in the history of the United Nations.

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This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis wishes to assure you, Mr. President, of its continued cooperation and support. We are confident that your presidency will be marked by adroit leadership, which will ensure a successful outcome to these deliberations.

On behalf of my Government, I am pleased to express gratitude to the outgoing president, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy of Côte d'Ivoire, for his diligence and able guidance in a year characterized by varying degrees of political turmoil and other serious challenges.

I salute the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his tenacious leadership, his goodwill, and his diplomatic skills *par excellence*, which have been tested with great frequency since he took office a few years ago. My Government congratulates the Secretary-General on the outstanding manner in which he has carried out the mandates of the Organization with regard to peace-keeping and humanitarian efforts. As our nations continue to work together to build a better future for our peoples, I wish to assure him of my Government's continued cooperation, support and goodwill.

As regards human rights, my Government is of the view that, as an international fraternity of nations, we find it incumbent on us all to remember that every single human being has an inalienable right to freedom, to the pursuit of happiness and to a better standard of life.

The sanctity of human life is not negotiable; it is paramount. My Government remains steadfast in its own efforts, and supports those of the United Nations to protect and preserve human rights.

I now call attention to the question of representative democracy. The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis warmly welcomes the unprecedented pace of democratic reforms taking place around the world. However, we are concerned with the growing complexities of recurrent problems and the emergence of new and more complicated ones which still pose serious threats to world peace and international security.

Consequently, my delegation commends the resolve of the United Nations and its willing leadership to steer Member States along a steady and purposeful course through the turbulent seas of political upheavals.

It is encouraging to see that, despite obvious problems, democracy continues to spring up in the far-flung corners of the world. This should propel us to channel our collective energies into ensuring that those peoples still yearning for a taste of freedom will one day come to experience the triumph of democracy.

The Caribbean breathed a sigh of relief when the horrid spectre of dictatorship was removed from the Haitian landscape. Finally, the people of Haiti can begin to harvest the rewards of peace as they proceed to build a lasting and viable democracy.

At present the Caribbean and Latin America enjoy a period of relative peace and the rule of law. We wish for this to continue infinitely. It is certainly not my intention to be the harbinger of doom. However, we cannot afford to take this situation for granted, because history bears frightening and credible witness to the fact that political instability and poverty in areas where democracy is fragile, tend to form a treacherous alliance.

Democracy as a mere concept, without the requisite support of infrastructural development and institution-building, cannot survive. In order for democracy to remain viable in countries which are unaccustomed to it and/or which suffer from high or increasing levels of poverty, democracy should be buttressed with the appropriate support systems.

My Government firmly believes that the United Nations is a people's Organization. Therefore, we the Members should impress upon the poor masses, which are often easily led and misled, that democracy works, that it can work for them, and that eventually, if given a chance, it will deliver the political and material benefits they require to improve their lives.

I wish to state here clearly that my Government is not appealing for hand-outs. On the contrary, we appeal for a reliable hand of genuine cooperation and partnership. Because our countries share a common world community, with common concerns and interests, we should become our brother's keeper. Failure to work together effectively means that we foreclose the possibility of learning from the past, and at the same time, we shall be burning the bridges to the future, built with selfless courage by our predecessors.

It appears that whenever we succeed in solving one major problem another more complicated one is foisted upon us. The post-cold-war world has given way to the re-emergence of agonizing, old ethnic tensions, worsening levels of poverty and widening economic inequalities which, together, continue to force their way

to the top of the international agenda. These new challenges require innovative and collective strategies. They require partnership.

The prevalence and the length of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia seem to elude attempts at an effective and lasting solution. None the less, we support the international efforts to find a diplomatic resolution of this conflict.

Therefore, my Government welcomes the timely initiatives of the United States Government, which we consider to be crucial in laying the groundwork for future progress in ending the war. Also, we wish to compliment efforts by the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to broker a lasting peace in the former Yugoslavia.

The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis strongly condemns the outrageous and cowardly acts of genocide, "ethnic cleansing" and indiscriminate killing of the innocent and helpless, on all sides in this brutal conflict. It is my Government's sincerest hope that the persons found to be responsible for these atrocities will be brought to justice.

I wish now to turn to another volatile region, the Middle East, which has for a long time been one of the lingering trouble spots in world affairs.

Times are changing, and in the interest of peace some Governments in the region have begun to respond to these changes by taking appropriate steps to reconcile their differences and to ensure that their peoples can live together in peace. The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis applauds the initiatives of the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization to rescue peace from the clutches of terrorism and violence. This augurs well for peace not only in the disputed territories but also throughout the Middle East. Further, we urge nations in the region to respect Israel's right to exist and to follow the lead of the recent accord reached between the Governments of Israel and the Kingdom of Jordan.

We hope that other countries in the region will heed the call of peace and use diplomacy in the pursuit of their objectives. Also, we urge all Governments to declare war on terrorism and to make a commitment to its eradication, wherever it may lurk. My Government is unambiguous in its belief that an act of terror against any man, anywhere, is an act of terror against all mankind, everywhere.

The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis welcomes the decision taken last year by the Iraqi Government to recognize the State of Kuwait. Kuwait's territorial integrity and sovereignty must be maintained. We also call on the Government of Iraq to comply with all United Nations resolutions and to release all Kuwaiti nationals detained illegally in Iraq.

The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis is convinced that the United Nations is about people. Consequently, we expect this Organization to advance the causes of all our peoples. To achieve this, however, Member Governments must fulfil their obligations to the Organization so that it can function more effectively. At the same time, the United Nations has to accept that it is accountable to its vast membership. Also, Member Governments and the Organization should seek to reconcile this critical relationship and work more closely in the future to devise new approaches to problem-solving, development and security. The time has come for us to change the way we do business. Our Government is in favour of the reform of the Security Council to reflect the current configuration of world affairs.

I should like to focus the Assembly's attention on the question of membership. As we all are well aware, one of the fundamental principles of this Organization is that of universality of membership. My Government perceives the United Nations as a people's organization; therefore, we believe that Member States will appreciate the need to consider the timely readmittance of the Republic of China on Taiwan to this body. The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis maintains that that country's 21 million inhabitants have the right to be appropriately represented in this Organization. Taiwan continues to comply with international law and has taken due steps to ensure the democratization of its politics and respect for and protection of human rights.

I now wish to refer to the important subjects of, first, the vulnerability of small island States and, secondly, sustainable development. Although these issues are not new, my Government remains convinced that the international community cannot afford to forget them. We commend the United Nations for hosting a Conference last year in Barbados to address these crucial issues. However, we need to go further. This will require partnership, cooperation and resolve from both developing and developed nations.

Many small island nations are painfully aware of the potential dangers that environmental degradation holds for small island States like Saint Kitts and Nevis. Some of these dangers are: rising sea levels, coastal erosion, sea pollution and natural disasters. These problems are easily compounded, because small island States with limited resources, such as those in the Caribbean, lack the financial and technological capabilities to deal with them.

The environmental vulnerability of small island States is intricately interwoven with our economic dependency and openness to external forces. My delegation therefore appeals to the international financial community to review its policies on concessional lending to small island States.

Statistics can be quite misleading. The tendency to judge a country and its people's development based on figures such as per capita income quite easily distort the objective reality of our situation.

Just last month, for example, Saint Kitts and Nevis was ravaged by two hurricanes. Unfortunately, the passage of the first was sufficient to disrupt seriously the daily lives of my people, to destroy the physical infrastructure, and to undermine severely the economic life of both islands. My country's main export crop, sugar, was almost completely wiped out, and prospects for the 1996 sugar harvest are discouraging. Further, my country's main hospital suffered extensive damage, placing the health of the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis at great risk. I take this opportunity to thank the international community for the quick response in providing emergency relief to the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

This, first and foremost, is the reality of small island States. It is this reality — not cold statistics — that should inform world policies towards them.

Returning to the subject of the environment, my delegation puts forward the view that, to a large extent, our islands have inherited problems that are not always of our own making. This is not meant to lay blame. On the contrary, we wish to suggest that all countries take appropriate measures to reduce the possibility of environmental degradation and that those in a position to help in environmental protection lend assistance to those unable to do so.

My delegation makes a fervent appeal to the developed world not to link the granting of development assistance to guarantees of environmental protection from developing countries. Instead, we propose a much closer and more constructive working relationship aimed at creating more meaningful, long-term strategies to solve environmental problems.

The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis vehemently condemns attempts by some countries to use the waterways of the Caribbean as a transshipment lane for their toxic and hazardous wastes. Clearly, this region suffers from a high vulnerability index. We therefore cannot afford any increase in this index.

We call on countries responsible to find safer and more appropriate means of dealing with their toxic and hazardous waste.

Saint Kitts and Nevis categorically supports the indefinite, unconditional extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and we anxiously await the successful conclusion of negotiations on a comprehensive test-ban treaty. Also, we urge all nations to impose a ban on nuclear tests.

With regard to women in development, we applaud the convening of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing to examine issues affecting women throughout the world. We appeal to Member States to go beyond the conference halls and to make genuine efforts to promote the interests of women. The protection of human rights and the pursuit of sustainable development cannot be viewed as distinct from the development of women and their rights. They must go hand in hand.

Women play a central and critical role in the process of development. Their contributions should be recognized and rewarded appropriately. My Government is committed to further legislation to eliminate gender discrimination and to institute policies that address the inequalities that women face.

We also have a duty to protect the lives of our children and to ensure that we provide them with adequate protection for their individual growth and future prosperity. We hold their future in trust, and we therefore have a sacred responsibility to them, as well as to future generations.

The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis strongly condemns any form of discrimination and violence against women and children. We urge all Governments to wage war on the barbarism of child prostitution, infanticide and abortion on discovery that the foetus is

female. The right to life is fundamental, universal and sacred.

In conclusion, the catalogue of problems confronting our nations bears ample testimony to the tremendous tasks ahead of us. Our countries share common goals such as the pursuit of peace, world security, and better standards of living for all our peoples.

Our predecessors have sown the seeds, and today we celebrate their legacy. My Government is convinced that we can achieve our individual goals by working collectively. And indeed we can. I know we can. Most importantly, we owe it to those who elected us, as well as to those who will follow.

As we, the peoples of the world, celebrate our past achievements, let us resolve to achieve even greater successes in the years ahead.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, on whom I now call.

Mr. Gurirab (Namibia): Mr. President, Namibia joins the preceding speakers in extending sincere congratulations and best wishes to you upon your unanimous election. This also goes for your esteemed General Committee, of which Namibia is a proud member.

This historic session of the General Assembly — marking the golden jubilee of our Organization — coincides with the fifth anniversary of Namibia's independence, brought about through a long and bitter struggle and the sacrifices of the Namibian people and, no less, in partnership with the United Nations, which played a crucial role in the process of our country's decolonization. We are filled with immense joy and satisfaction over this happy coincidence.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, my good brother and colleague, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, presided over the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly with great skill, wisdom and dedication. I commend him for a job well done and, in particular, for bringing excellence and industry to this important office, all aimed at partnership and development. In this context, Namibia will fully cooperate with the presidency of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General in pursuit of our common objectives that have been assigned to various open-ended working groups aimed at restructuring and strengthening the United Nations.

This special commemorative session of the General Assembly will bring together a record number of world leaders including, naturally, the Head of State of the Republic of Namibia, Mr. Sam Nujoma, for a big celebration, collective stock-taking, introspection and reflection, and for renewed commitment to action on the basis of a new vision for the future and rededication towards peace, development, gender equality, tolerance and brotherhood in this, our one global village.

The cardinal purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, since its adoption in 1945, have been these: to save lives, to liberate all those everywhere still in bondage, to promote democratic ideals and values, to protect and defend human rights and civil liberties — codified subsequently in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — and, above all, to protect succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which has wrought so much devastation and human suffering in the world in the course of this century.

In furtherance of these purposes and principles and their early realization, our illustrious Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has applied his mind and energy to the challenges of our times by formulating two seminal documents — "An Agenda for Peace" and "An Agenda for Development". These timely and compelling initiatives call for international cooperation, as well as for the allocation of new and additional resources. Indeed, they also place domestic obligations on Governments and civil societies alike.

Specifically, in the context of the fiftieth anniversary session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General has submitted a comprehensive annual report, complete with focused recommendations for action on various fronts. Namibia therefore pays a well-deserved tribute to the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts in the service

of the United Nations and for fresh initiatives to further advance peace and development in the world.

Reviewing history and past achievements, on this occasion marking the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, is necessarily in order. At the same time, however, balancing present challenges and opportunities requires leadership, vision, commitment and courage on the part of world leaders. Let us hope that this commemorative session will show the way forward and achieve the desired objectives.

The most important of all the commitments that the global community must fulfil is to use the collective political will and resources of the States Members the United Nations

> "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

This is the soul of the Charter of the United Nations.

Today, the world is united behind the promotion of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Let me, however, hasten to add that the eradication of poverty on a sustainable basis, through the provision of adequate education, health care, employment and housing and the empowerment of women, needs to be placed at the top of the priority list of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, which have been playing a vital role in social and economic development.

With the hindsight of 50 years, we know that the United Nations was at the start, and remains today, more than a mere response to the horrors and circumstances of the Second World War and its tormenting legacies. It is a sacred trust of life itself and an indispensable vehicle for the preservation of civilization, in the interests of all nations and peoples.

One of those tormenting legacies was the cold war. The hopes and expectations of millions the world over were held hostage for decades by the politics of confrontation and the division of the world into hostile military blocs and rival ideological camps. This resulted in the derailing of the purposes and objectives for which the United Nations stands.

The arms race and espionage, as well as competing alignments, seriously sapped the vital resources, time and energies of nations, creating more and more hotbeds of tension, thus militating against peaceful coexistence and mutually beneficial inter-State relations.

Fortunately, a nuclear holocaust was averted. A third world war did not happen. But violence, distrust and military build-up characterized world affairs for a very long time. During this dangerous period the planet Earth teetered on the brink of a ghastly disaster. In the face of all this, men and women of peace, wisdom and compassion, from all corners of the Earth, kept raising voices of reason and appealing for sanity, disarmament and dialogue.

Decolonization is perhaps the most laudable achievement of the United Nations. The world witnessed an unprecedented and unstoppable wave of demands, by millions the world over, for freedom and the exercise of the right to self-determination. This, happily, led to the achievement of independence by so many countries in Asia, Latin America — especially the Caribbean — and Africa, which swelled the membership of the United Nations beyond 100. Today the number of Members, at 185, is more than three times the original number — the 51 founding nations of 1945.

In Namibia, the moment came for the United Nations to put its resources where its convictions and responsibilities were. It demonstrated its firm commitment by providing necessary funds and technical capacity to the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG), which facilitated Namibia's smooth transition to nationhood in 1990. This success story stands out today as a model of successful United Nations peace-keeping and decolonization.

Other major United Nations success stories followed — in Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique and Haiti. We hope for the same positive outcome in Angola and other places. In all these cases, what ensured success was a combination of political consensus, peace-keeping, peace enforcement and humanitarian assistance.

It has been said many times in so many ways that if the United Nations had not existed, collective yearning to create it would have been irresistible. That is why Namibia attaches great importance to its membership of the United Nations. Since joining the United Nations, Namibia has been playing an active role in all the activities of the Organization. Namibia participated in the peace-keeping operation in Cambodia and sent election observers to Angola under United Nations auspices. Namibia also sent a legal expert as a rapporteur to

represent the Human Rights Commission in Somalia. But more than that, Namibia has been paying its assessed and voluntary contributions on time and in full, for we believe membership is not enough: without resources the Organization cannot carry out its mandate.

As we look towards the next millennium, I should like to state the position of the Government of the Republic of Namibia on the following issues: regional cooperation; international economic cooperation; major United Nations conferences; nuclear disarmament; and reform of the United Nations.

Regional cooperation: in southern Africa, member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which now includes Mauritius, have combined their efforts to bring about genuine reconstruction and development in our subregion. Peace is a prerequisite of development. Without sustainable development, there can be neither peace nor stability. While achievement of peace has created favourable conditions for socio-economic development in southern Africa, the scars of apartheid and destabilization remain. For example, to realize these objectives, States members of SADC have decided to pool their resources in order to implement joint projects in the fields of energy and water. With this in mind, several protocols were signed at the recent SADC Summit in Johannesburg.

Additional areas in which SADC member States are coordinating their policies include de-mining, combating crime, gun-running, drug-trafficking, money-laundering, illicit cross-border trade, and other forms of criminal activity. It is hoped that these efforts will lead to an ideal situation allowing for free movement of people, capital, goods and services, thereby transforming SADC into a community of shared experiences and aspirations. Moreover, mechanisms for conflict resolution, political consultation and peace-keeping are enjoying high priority among these regional concerns.

I felt reinforced after listening to the inspiring statement delivered this morning by my brother and colleague, His Excellency, Mr. Alfred Nzo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Africa. May I reassure him here of Namibia's firm commitment to continue working closely with the Government and people of South Africa for the achievement of genuine peace, stability, development and prosperity throughout southern Africa.

The completion of the Trans-Caprivi and Trans-Kalahari highways connecting land-locked neighbouring countries to the Namibian port of Walvis Bay will further strengthen regional cooperation, trade and integration. We do all this pursuant to the letter and spirit of the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community. There is no doubt that a successful SADC will strengthen the African Economic Community.

On international economic cooperation, Namibia subscribes to the view, emphasized by the Economic and Social Council at its last meeting, that development cannot flourish in the midst of conflict and instability. It follows from this that mutually beneficial economic cooperation is not possible as long as an unjust international economic system exists. Until we all become equal partners in the global economy, developing countries, especially African countries, will for ever remain underdeveloped. Contrary to the views being expressed in some quarters, Namibia maintains that the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization have played a vital and constructive role in assisting developing countries.

The strengthening of South-South cooperation is more than ever a vehicle that is needed for the enhancement of the trade and economic development of the countries of the South. Namibia therefore supports the South Centre and appeals for financial and material contributions to its programmes.

It is also Namibia's firm belief that the recently inaugurated African-Latin American Institute, with regional headquarters in Namibia and Uruguay respectively, will further strengthen South-South cooperation. Namibia also welcomes the emerging initiatives aimed at encouraging horizontal dialogue and cooperation among SADC, the Association of South-East Asian Nations, the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) and other economic groupings of the countries of the South.

As regards major United Nations conferences, we may say that never before in the history of our Organization have the social needs of humankind taken centre stage. Humanity has recognized that conservation of the environment is tantamount to preservation of human life; respect for and protection of human rights is the basis for democracy, good governance and development; addressing population issues within the framework of development is necessary in order to

identify the impact of socio-demographic trends on the well-being of people; peace is not only the absence of war but also a necessary condition for the attainment of social and economic development; and gender equality is central to development and peace.

The realization of the commitments made at all these conferences should form the centrepiece of the agenda for the twenty-first century.

For Namibia, protection of the environment is enshrined in our Constitution. The promotion and defence of democracy and human rights have become the vital pillars of Namibia's Government and society. In keeping with the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Namibia has fully integrated population issues into its First National Development Plan.

Similarly, the commitments we made at the World Summit for Social Development continue to be a top priority of the Government. The Law Reform Commission is finalizing recommendations to the Namibian Parliament for enactment of the necessary legislation.

Namibia is proud of its contribution to the preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women and the honour bestowed upon its delegation to serve as Rapporteur-General at that Conference, in Beijing. It therefore goes without saying that Namibia will do everything possible to ensure implementation of the Platform for Action adopted at the Conference.

The scientific and technological achievements of humankind should be used for peace and development. All weapons of mass destruction must be destroyed. The time has come for complete nuclear disarmament.

Furthermore, Namibia calls upon the nuclear-weapon States to fulfil the commitment made at the last Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to move speedily towards the destruction of all nuclear weapons. In this regard, Namibia deplores the new spate of nuclear testing. Namibia will continue to participate actively towards the early completion of the draft treaty of the denuclearization of Africa.

With regard to United Nations reform, Namibia believes that the decision-making machinery of the Security Council, as it exists today, cannot effectively serve the international community in the twentieth century. The phenomenal numerical growth in the membership of the United Nations must be reflected in representation on the Security Council. The reform, restructuring and enlargement of the Security Council should reflect the cardinal principles of sovereign equality of all States, universality, democracy and transparency. It is only in this way that the authority, legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness of the Security Council can be ensured.

Namibia sees no problem in the addition of Germany and Japan as permanent members of the Security Council. But at the same time, it is Namibia's strong view that Africa, Asia and Latin America are entitled to representation as permanent members as well as through the allocation of additional seats in the Security Council for non-permanent members. What we seek is the acceptance of the principle. The mechanism of how to bring this about is the subject of ongoing consultations in the relevant Open-ended Working Group. The new world order has no place, in Namibia's view, for the outmoded veto power, and it must be abolished.

The new world order, which is thought of as offering the best hope for economic cooperation and free trade, should liberate itself from the remaining shackles of the cold war and replace confrontation with dialogue wherever differences still exist.

Namibia welcomes the latest agreement on Palestinian self-rule, signed between the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. We look forward to the early achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, leading to the establishment of a Palestinian State.

The decolonization of Africa is not yet complete. Namibia therefore supports the early exercise by the Saharan people of their right to self-determination on the basis of a free, fair and transparent referendum in Western Sahara, under the joint supervision and control of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity.

There can be no military solution to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina conflict. Therefore, Namibia urges all parties involved to end the suffering of their people and find a lasting and peaceful political solution to that conflict.

As the year comes to an end, it is heartening to note that the conflict in Liberia has been resolved with the establishment of a broad-based, multi-party provisional Government. We welcome this wholeheartedly. Let us

hope that this is a good omen for the resolution of the conflicts in Somalia, Sudan, Burundi and Sierra Leone.

Since the signing of the Lusaka Protocol on Angola last year, the peace process in that sisterly country is making steady progress. The spirit of reconciliation and dialogue is permeating the entire society, encouraged by the regular face-to-face talks between President José Eduardo dos Santos of Angola and Mr. Jonas Savimbi of UNITA. It is Namibia's sincere hope that the pledges made in Brussels at the recent round-table conference on Angola will be translated into actual resources for reconstruction and development in that country, a neighbour of ours.

Africa is long overdue to root out, once and for all, all the criminal activities of mercenaries, which, like acts of terrorism, stand condemned in the resolutions of both the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity. The latest *coup* on one of the islands of the Comoros has made this an extremely serious matter which now calls for urgent action by the international community. Namibia therefore welcomes the action taken to restore the Government and law and order on the island.

The address His Holiness Pope John Paul II delivered from this rostrum yesterday was a thoughtful message conveying optimism, hope and good will as we stand on the threshold of the next millennium. The Pope stressed universal love and family, subjects which embrace the entire human race.

Let me conclude by expressing my sincere wish that this historic commemorative session of the General Assembly will not fail to highlight public awareness of the work of the United Nations and the continued relevance of the Organization to the lives of individuals and communities everywhere. The vision of the founders 50 years ago focused on the welfare and security of succeeding generations. Nations and peoples, as represented by non-governmental organizations, should move forward together into the next millennium for a better world in which children will feel safer.

The President: I now call on the Chairperson of the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago, Her Excellency Mrs. Annette des Iles.

Mrs. des Iles (Trinidad and Tobago): It is a great honour for me to extend to you, Sir, warmest congratulations, on behalf of the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago, on your election as President of this session of the General Assembly. The celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and the urgent need to respond to a number of major questions facing the Organization make this a singularly important year. We are confident that with your vision and leadership you will guide this historic Assembly session to a successful conclusion.

My delegation would also like to express its deep appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy of Côte d'Ivoire, for the able manner in which he presided over the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

We are also particularly pleased to welcome the small island State of Palau as the one hundred and eighty-fifth Member of the United Nations.

Most States represented in this Hall were not present at the historic signing of the United Nations Charter in San Francisco 50 years ago, but on gaining independence they applied for membership in this Organization as an essential part of their quest for a secure and stable international environment and improved standards of living. Trinidad and Tobago, a small democratic State, which gained its independence in 1962, was no exception.

Since 1962, when we became a Member of the United Nations, there have been profound changes in international relations and consequent increases in the responsibilities of this Organization. The most dramatic of these changes was the end of the cold war, which engendered a certain optimism that there would be an anticipated peace dividend which would provide impetus to international cooperation for development. Unfortunately this was not to be. The end of the cold war triggered an almost unprecedented surge of ethnic and nationalist conflict, which proceeded to consume much of the attention and resources of the international community.

Our Organization has had to adapt quickly to meet these challenges. There was a sudden and meteoric rise in the volume and, indeed, the complexity of United Nations peace-keeping activities. The Organization has had its share of successes and disappointments. However, despite the failure to meet growing expectations, the United Nations can be justly proud of many of its achievements in the field of peace-keeping, in the restoration of democracy, and in its response to emergency situations. The successes in Central America, Cambodia, Namibia, Mozambique and South Africa bear

ample testimony to the effective role the United Nations can play in the advancement of peace, justice and security.

In our region, the cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States in the restoration of the democratically elected President of Haiti shows what can be accomplished once the necessary political will exists in support of such actions. In this regard, we welcome the recently held legislative and local elections in Haiti, which, in spite of difficulties, saw thousands of Haitians assemble peacefully and safely to cast their ballots. We are confident that these developments will serve to enhance Haiti's efforts to consolidate democracy, and will assist in the process of national reconciliation. The international community must continue to assist the Government and people of Haiti in the post-emergency period and in their long-term efforts to achieve economic and social reconstruction.

In the Middle East, Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the interim agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization on the expansion of Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank, which was signed in Washington, D.C. on 28 September 1995. It represents another significant advance in the process towards lasting peace in the region.

As for the former Yugoslavia, we are encouraged by the efforts on the part of all sides in the conflict to come to the negotiating table, and we express the hope that this development will significantly advance the process towards peace and stability in that war-torn region.

On the African continent, the spirit of reconciliation which has prevailed in some areas of conflict gives us hope that some of the seemingly more intractable problems can also be resolved. The international community must fulfil its responsibilities in assisting the process.

Earlier this year the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons decided to extend the Treaty indefinitely. The Conference also adopted a number of principles and objectives, one of which called for the completion of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty no later than the third quarter of 1996. It was also the understanding of the international community that there would be no further nuclear tests, pending the entry into force of that treaty. Trinidad and Tobago has joined other parties to the Tlatelolco and Rarotonga Treaties in rejecting current nuclear testing by some nuclear-weapon States, and appeals to those States to heed the mounting requests to cease nuclear testing.

Related to our environmental concerns over nuclear testing is the equally critical issue of the marine transport of irradiated nuclear fuel, plutonium and high-level radioactive wastes. These shipments continue to take place despite the potentially catastrophic effects on small island developing States, whose fragile and vulnerable economies are overwhelmingly dependent on their marine and coastal resources, and who possess neither the resources nor the capability to deal with possible accidents of this nature. My delegation would therefore like to reiterate the priority concern which we attach to this issue, and to urge the shipment countries to respect the wishes of the small island developing States and other *en route* States, which have called for an end to these shipments through their archipelagic and territorial waters as well as their exclusive economic zones.

The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations will be a time for reflection and re-examination of the activities of the Organization, not only as they relate to conflict situations but, equally, in the field of development as a necessary precondition for peace and as the best guarantee of long-term stability.

At the national level, Trinidad and Tobago has undertaken a programme of economic reform and restructuring of the economy, which is almost complete. Our development focus has been on the pursuit of a sound macroeconomic policy based on a number of measures, which include a disciplined fiscal stance and the consistent implementation of an orderly and broad-based divestment programme, the enactment of structural and legislative reforms designed to provide an environment for the growth of a resilient and internationally competitive private sector and one conducive to greater foreign investment, the liberalization of the trade and exchange-rate regimes aimed at enhancing our competitiveness and a comprehensive programme of reform of the domestic financial system. Emphasis has also been placed on the reform of the public sector and the provision of basic infrastructure in order to ensure the efficient delivery of reliable, high-quality services, the progressive restructuring of our educational system so as to put in place a sustainable human-resource development programme which would respond to the new challenges and needs of our development, and the employment of social policies aimed at protecting the most vulnerable in our society. In order to succeed, however, these measures must be complemented by a supportive regional and international environment.

For small States, regional integration is an imperative, and, increasingly, regional cooperation systems are seen as providing the essential building blocks on which to construct hemispheric and wider international cooperation. At the last Conference of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Heads of Government, held at Georgetown from 4 to 7 July, Trinidad and Tobago was pleased to welcome Suriname as the fourteenth member of the Caribbean Community.

The successful inaugural summit meeting of the Association of Caribbean States, which was held at Port of Spain from 17 to 18 August 1995, has also opened a new chapter in the history of cooperation among countries of the wider Caribbean. The adoption of the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action on Tourism, Trade and Transportation provides a practical blueprint to foster development and enhance economic integration among all countries of the Caribbean. In this context, Trinidad and Tobago reiterates the importance we attach to the full reintegration of Cuba in the Western Hemisphere.

I have already alluded to the need to achieve greater balance in United Nations activities in the fields of peace-keeping and development. The need for such a balance assumes even greater urgency when one recognizes that to an increasing extent the nature, scope and complexity of development challenges today are beyond the limits and control of the nation State.

To the traditionally elusive development problems of persistent poverty, debilitating debt, declining levels of official development assistance, unemployment, demographic pressures and the worsening income gap and terms of trade between developed and developing countries, one must add the new and additional challenges of environmental degradation and globalization. Some of these will continue to require a national approach, but the great majority of them are beyond the limits of national action and thus require a common commitment, a common approach, and a call to global neighbourhood action.

The notion of shared responsibilities and the recognition of the need for mechanisms for collective action are the *raison d'être* of the United Nations system. A coordinated and integrated United Nations system that is focused and adequately funded thus remains the best hope for effectively dealing with these myriad and complex development challenges.

I can think of no better way to refocus and recommit the United Nations to the goals of development and global security for all than through the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive action-oriented agenda for development. An agenda which continues to address traditional development problems while simultaneously tackling the questions of protectionism, capital flows, reform of the international economic decision-making processes and management of the global economy must be the focus of our efforts.

At the recent Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing, the international community recognized the crucial role that women play in the development process and acknowledged that effective international cooperation for development will remain an elusive goal unless women can participate fully in the political, economic and social life of their respective societies. The Beijing Conference, along with the other global conferences held at Rio, Barbados, Cairo and Copenhagen, have served to buttress the case for an integrated approach to sustainable development, which must be informed by environmental, social, demographic, gender and human- resource considerations. The agenda for development must therefore seek to implement and fulfil, in an integrated manner, the commitments arising out of these Conferences.

Within the agenda for development particular consideration must also be given to assisting developing countries, especially those with small and vulnerable economies in advancing their economic transformation and in facilitating their greater participation in the world economy.

Trinidad and Tobago is committed to free trade and to placing its economy on a development path compatible with the demands of the new global order. However, as the challenges of globalization have demonstrated, national policies are not enough. To achieve sustained economic growth and sustainable development we need a supportive and favourable international economic environment as well as a fair, open and non-discriminatory trading system, one which recognizes that small and vulnerable economies like our own are at a particular disadvantage because of our size and the lack of economies of scale. No effort must therefore be spared to ensure that we are provided with the necessary market access so critical to our trade-expansion and development objectives. Indeed, to do anything less within the agenda for development would be a denial of the fact that globalization has now placed an even greater responsibility on the major developed countries to ensure

that their macroeconomic policies are favourable to growth and development in the rest of the world.

Trinidad and Tobago is also of the view that the agenda for development offers an opportunity to develop the global partnership for sustainable development and to promote the implementation of the agreements reached at the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro in 1992. In this process, the special situation and needs of small island developing States and the recognition of their environmental vulnerability must receive priority attention. Trinidad and Tobago therefore wishes to reiterate the particular importance we attach to the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

In the Caribbean, recent devastating hurricanes have once again dramatically demonstrated the fragility of the ecosystems and the vulnerability of the economies of small islands. We are grateful to those Member States which have joined CARICOM countries in providing emergency assistance, and we appeal to the international community to continue its support for reconstruction efforts in the affected countries.

The General Assembly will be called upon at this session to make several critical decisions relating to the future of the United Nations system. Trinidad and Tobago is of the view that the elements of the reform exercise currently before the Assembly constitute a good basis for a more effective United Nations.

Indeed, Member States must use the momentum provided by this fiftieth-anniversary session to reach an agreement to expand the Security Council so as to enhance its legitimacy and effectiveness, to resolve the critical financial situation of the United Nations, to complete an action-oriented and comprehensive Agenda for Development with adequate and predictable resources for its implementation, and to strike a reasonable balance between resources for peace-keeping and for development.

Reform, however, cannot be an end in itself. It is but a means to an end, and it will only be meaningful if we are united in the view that a strengthened and revitalized United Nations is an imperative, given the inescapable reality of today's global village; that the world of the future will need more, not fewer, effective international collaborative mechanisms to confront common threats; and that the United Nations remains the only available instrument for the necessary global effort required to tackle these challenges.

The critical financial situation of the United Nations must be a source of concern to all Member States. The Secretary-General has described with increasing urgency and frustration the difficulties he is facing in carrying out the tasks entrusted to him because of a lack of the necessary resources. The failure, in particular, of the largest contributor to pay its legally assessed contributions has placed the Organization on the brink of insolvency. There must therefore be a greater commitment on the part of all Member States to meet their obligations, as well as a greater manifestation of will to resolve the overall financial situation of the United Nations. Unless we demonstrate this commitment, the paeans of praise with which we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary will have a very hollow ring.

At this fiftieth anniversary of the Organization, let us recall the opening words of the United Nations Charter:

> "We the peoples of the United Nations ... have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims."

In a spirit of global partnership, we must renew our resolve, in accordance with the principles and purposes of the Charter, to ensure the realization of the objectives for which the Organization was established: peace, equality, justice and development for all. Trinidad and Tobago pledges to work with others to confront the challenges that face our Organization as we move towards the twenty-first century.

The President: I call next on the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Gabon, His Excellency Mr. Casimir Oye Mba.

Mr. Oye Mba (Gabon) (*interpretation from French*): As I address the General Assembly on behalf of the Gabonese Republic, I wish first of all to discharge the duty of sincerely congratulating you, Sir, on behalf of my delegation and on my own account, on your unanimous election to the presidency of the fiftieth session. The Assembly's choice reflects the appreciation of all States Members of the United Nations for the contribution of your country, Portugal, to the quest for solutions to the problems besetting the world. Your election highlights your talents as a diplomat and statesman and your wide experience.

It gives me pleasure also to express our gratitude and admiration to your predecessor, Mr. Amara Essy,

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire. The Gabonese Republic hails that fine diplomat and thanks him for the dedication and readiness to act he placed in the service of the world Organization at the forty-ninth session; his work was a source of pride for the entire African continent.

I cannot fail to mention the Gabonese Republic's staunch support for the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in his tireless efforts in the service of peace, security and development.

Mr. Kulla (Albania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I wish now to say a few words about the unique nature of this session, during which the Assembly will convene in special meetings to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization. At those special meetings, Heads of State or Government will have an opportunity to assess the impact of some of the action we have taken pursuant to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. True, those purposes have not been completely fulfilled, but in all fairness we must acknowledge that there has been considerable progress, especially on respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and peace, without which nothing is possible. Yet development remains a major concern, despite the efforts that have been devoted to it.

Every nation represented here is a reflection of mankind, whose common values the founders of the United Nations evoked. Among those values I would highlight those of greatest concern at the end of the twentieth century: peace, freedom and development.

Gabon's dedication to the ideal of peace is a constant element in its foreign policy and its diplomacy. The inclusion of that ideal in the Charter was most appealing to the leadership of Gabon and eased our accession to membership of the United Nations, on 20 September 1960. Hence, as a Member of the United Nations we took our proper place alongside other nations, in the harmony of our respective differences.

I wish to pay tribute to the founders of non-alignment, who were the first to reflect in deeds, through the doctrine of peaceful coexistence, the principles enshrined in the San Francisco Charter. Twenty-five years later, the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly confirm that interpretation. We are duty-bound to go back to the source in order to respond to the need — the urgent need — for new, creative thinking in favour of peace.

It is an honour and a duty to recall that Gabon's experience in the settlement of conflicts has its living roots deep in Bantu civilization. Our view of solidarity among peoples gives a role to Gabon's commitment to cooperate with all States Members of the United Nations whatever their ideology or the nature of their political regime. This promotes the virtues of dialogue and tolerance among peoples and nations, virtues we practice in our homes and within our families, virtues that, through the international action of President Omar Bongo, the Gabonese Republic has built into a principle of our diplomatic and political culture.

Our idea of peace, then, is primarily functional in nature. It reminds us every day that the state of peace among nations is a continuous process, one which requires at all times vigilance, courage and consistency in our efforts. Gabon can state with pride that it is dedicated to the peaceful conduct of its relations with all the components of the international community.

"We are judged by our actions", a great thinker quite rightly observed. Those actions that we have been able to inscribe in the registry of peace, both bilaterally and multilaterally, follow the path traced by the Charter of the United Nations. They illustrate, first of all, our unswerving loyalty to the Organization, which makes us automatically involved in all the missions and all the actions it has undertaken anywhere in the world where peace has been threatened or might be threatened. The efforts made quite recently by the international community to heal the open wounds in Rwanda have had our full support. The efforts made by the same international community in Angola have often been supplemented by our direct or indirect involvement. It goes without saying that with regard to these situations my country appeals to the community of nations to continue its multifaceted assistance for the reintegration and rebuilding of those two countries. This appeal is addressed also to all the other areas of tension in Africa and in the rest of the world.

These actions are also illustrated by our appreciation of and satisfaction with the progress achieved in the quest for peace in the Middle East with the signing of the Taba Agreement in Washington; and in Central Europe as a result of the new atmosphere brought about by discussions that made it possible for all the parties involved in the situation in the former Yugoslavia to meet together in New York. In our view, all these factors bear witness to the fact that the international community is

prepared to attenuate as much as possible the anguish caused our peoples by the risks of war in the world.

Nevertheless, every one of us would readily agree that real threats to peace in international relations still exist today. The outline of a new world order is still hard for us to grasp; it shows us the paradoxical picture of a fragile peace. Yet our expectations of the establishment of this new world order are not fruitless. For the time being, Gabon gives due value to the dynamics which led, at the global and regional levels, to the creation of the mechanisms designed to prevent conflicts.

While peace has the virtue of making us feel safer, freedom can open up prospects for individual and collective development. In the view of the founders of the United Nations, freedom is a decisive element for the establishment of an environment and an overall spiritual framework allowing for the emergence of social progress and the establishment of better living conditions. Those who signed the Charter received a mandate, as it were, to create the conditions for this, to the benefit of the people in their care. The results of this commitment to implement the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination and the principle of respect for human rights are known to all, just as we all know of, and regard highly, the actions taken by our Organization to inspire, to support and even to initiate policies undertaken in these fields. In this context, any policy contrary to this which calls these achievements into question will give rise to the reactions necessary to preserve the balance between States and to restore everyone's rights. Therefore, our dedication to the principle of the inviolability of borders in Africa is a guarantee of our independence and our freedom, since it shows that we accept freedom for other States as well.

My country's experience in promoting and protecting basic political, cultural and social human rights in recent years has been outstanding. The establishment of a State based on the rule of law with a transition from a single-party system to a pluralist democracy has taken place smoothly. The results of this transition, and the promises born of this experience for democracy in our country, flowed from the fact that they dovetail with our cultural values, whose spiritual foundations favour the individual's place in society, as the founder of and justification for our cities.

In Gabon, dialogue is valid only for human beings since it is human beings who initiate it and carry it out for their own benefit. An example of this Gabonese practice of dialogue was the results achieved barely a year ago at the meeting held by representatives of the majority and opposition political parties in Paris in September and October 1994 to define together the ways and means for the consensual governance of our democracy that was then being threatened. These results will be reflected in the signing of the so-called Paris Agreements in the presence of international observers.

Social conflicts and confrontations between opposing political forces can be overcome by rational discussions and tolerance of the opinions of others. We are truly convinced that *coups d'état* are not relevant in present times. That is why Gabon, through its President, Omar Bongo, firmly condemned the unfortunate events which occurred in Sao Tome and Principe, and more recently in the Comoros.

Freedom, security and peace are in our view the very bases of our democracy. To be sure, this democracy is only taking its first steps, but it will undoubtedly enable the Gabonese people to reach a new stage in its history and its political life.

Another dimension of the political and social problems in Africa and everywhere in the world is the status of women in society. In my country, women have the same rights as men. Our educational system ensures free access by all school-age children to instruction; that is in the interest of the entire Gabonese nation. In social terms, then, taking into account the recent concerns relating to the status of women and children, as illustrated in the World Summit for Children in New York in 1990, and the Beijing Conference in 1995, the Republic of Gabon has made choices that are in line with the spirit of the actions initiated by the United Nations.

Once again, I would mention the founders of our Organization and praise their generosity of spirit in placing the happiness of peoples in the context of extending freedom.

The solidarity advocated for States as the absolute prerequisite for defining ensuing strategies was designed to discourage them from any inclination of selfishness in the implementation of those strategies.

Unfortunately, however, we must admit that this legacy has, instead, come to look more like "every man for himself", a standard that has been set up as providing the ways and means to find happiness. The differences among nations have revealed the gaps between peoples the world over at the level of their development.

However, in this sphere, the United Nations has tried to create a range of instruments and mechanisms designed to provide our Governments with the assistance they expect. Whatever the allegiance of the peoples represented here, each and every one of us will acknowledge and appreciate, for example, the role of UNESCO in education, science and culture; of the World Health Organization on the basis of its contribution to the eradication of major endemic and pandemic diseases; or that of the United Nations Development Programme in carrying out development projects.

Nevertheless, the overall verdict is still mixed. We believe that although our actions have allowed humanity to survive, they have not fully succeeded in improving the quality of life for most people. In both the South and the North, our world is still littered, not just with pockets but with vast tracts of poverty. All our States, small or large, are being eaten away, to various degrees, by the cancer of abject poverty.

The United Nations recent decision to hold a world summit in Copenhagen devoted to social development was welcomed by Gabon, which was an active participant. President Bongo himself said that that Summit was the result of an in-depth analysis of the state of extreme poverty in which a large part of humanity was living today.

Consequently, for our country, the programme of action drawn up at the end of the Summit — which, we are pleased to say, follows up the major guidelines already found in the United Nations programme of action for the establishment of a new international economic order, on the one hand, and the major principles of "An Agenda for Development", on the other — should be translated into action, as hoped.

We are all aware that, by the same token, this endeavour will require the mobilized contribution of all of the countries and bodies that constitute the international community.

At the close of the twentieth century, Africa alone will have broken all records for underdevelopment. By way of example, it has three quarters of the least developed countries; it has the lowest level of growth; it is practically non-existent in international trade. Unfortunately, Africa is today a continent apart, despite its enormous potential.

It, nevertheless, accepts the fact that responsibility for economic recovery is largely in its hands and that this task depends above all on its own efforts. But it is still obvious that the enormity of the crisis it is going through and the level of resources needed make international support for its efforts necessary.

For Africa in general and for Gabon more particularly, a more appropriate approach to the debt burden would favour a solution to this issue, given the substantial inverse capital flows going to our creditors as a result of paying back our debt.

Africa wishes to remind the world of its commitment to face its responsibilities with regard to debt and debt servicing. This was the position adopted by our Heads of State at the most recent Summit of the Organization of African Unity. Gabon supports this. However, it looks to the shrewdness of its creditors and in the understandable interest of all parties concerned in this issue, to help us obtain favourable treatment in conditions for repayment.

Gabon effectively devotes more than half of its annual budget to debt repayment, thereby crippling its development efforts — this in spite of the fact that the machinery for debt reduction advocated in recent years has discriminated against us by excluding us from the list of beneficiaries. We suggest that the reason given, based on the high per capita gross national product, is unfair.

This strange singling out of Gabon, which is still almost the only country in the so-called middle-income category in the southern Sahara, is not justified in reality. This situation places a burden on our economy and thereby affects our economic relations abroad.

This appeal to the international community for fairer treatment of my country is not a case of begging — no more for Gabon than for the rest of Africa — because, as Omar Bongo stated at the Copenhagen summit: "Africa is not asking for charity".

In reality, helping our credibility and viability in economic and financial terms, actually strengthens the international trading system for the common good. This is not a matter of philanthropy but rather of common sense: helping the South means helping the North, and ultimately the entire world.

At the end of this rapid reading before this Assembly, dealing with the themes of peace, freedom and development, my appeals to our Organization will be clear to all. It is expected to respond to the concerns I have just expressed.

On the eve of the special meeting to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of our Organization, I hope that all of its Members will realize the enormous import of this opportunity, for the world is changing before our very eyes. The countries represented here are also changing, at different rates. Obviously, I cannot accept the idea that the United Nations itself could fail to keep up with this trend.

For this reason, the measures advocated along these lines by the Secretary-General of the United Nations could be supplemented by others that my country would like to see, from the point of view of restructuring, and therefore readapting the United Nations system to the realities of today's world.

The present context is conducive to this. An overall reform of the system is required, for the security of our peoples, and of the States that comprise it, and in the final analysis, in the interest of renewing the United Nations itself.

I conclude my speech, therefore, on this note of hope.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chad, His Excellency Mr. Ahmat Abderaman Haggar.

Mr. Haggar (Chad) (*interpretation from French*): Half a century ago the representatives of some 50 nations met in San Francisco, in the United States, to create a new world order for the post-war period. The founding fathers sought to define rules and conduct enabling the countries of the whole world to live free and safe from the scourge of war. They gave the United Nations certain purposes that were as noble as they were ambitious, such as, to mention only a few, the maintenance of international peace and security; the promotion of progress and international development; respect for human rights and the rights of peoples; and international cooperation.

While we rightly rejoice at the results obtained in some of these areas, we must note that in others, concern persists regarding the many internal conflicts and economic and social crises that confront some of our States.

It was in an atmosphere of hope, but also uncertainty, that His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral was elected to guide the work of this session which must address the aspirations for peace and well-being of our peoples. My delegation is happy at his election and warmly congratulates him, convinced that his intellectual qualities and diplomatic skills will ensure success in our deliberations. We assure the President of our full cooperation.

I wish also to pay a well-deserved tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, Foreign Minister of Côte d'Ivoire, who skilfully guided the proceedings of our previous session.

I should like to reiterate our deep gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who since his election as the head of our Organization has resolutely sought to find solutions to our world's many problems.

Our Organization has succeeded in sparing humanity a third world war, but areas of concern remain. Before addressing them, I should like to briefly describe the situation in my country, and particularly the efforts that my Government has made to solve both political and as socio-economic problems.

At the last session the Chadian delegation described to the Assembly the progress that we had made towards the democratization of political life. Today I can report that this has become a tangible reality. We have put machinery and structures in place to enable the Chadian people freely and openly to choose their institutions and their leaders. I refer in particular to the Independent National Electoral Commission, responsible for supervising and monitoring the preparation of electoral rolls and organizing the various elections; the Supreme Council for Communications, charged with guaranteeing equitable access to the media to political parties, civil society and individual citizens; and the Constitutional Court, which is to settle electoral disputes, among other things. It is important to emphasize that all shades of political and social opinion are represented in these bodies.

The liberalization of political life can also be seen in the existence of 53 recognized parties as well as a number of civil associations and trade unions. Moreover, a draft constitution agreed by all those involved in civil and political life will soon be put to the vote in a referendum. I can state from this rostrum that the democratic process is under way and that Chad is merely awaiting the various votes to conclude it.

The President of the Republic, General Idriss Déby, stated at this year's presentation of New Year's greetings from the Diplomatic Corps that he was determined to do his utmost to ensure that the votes were transparent and took place in the best possible conditions. Despite this

solemn commitment, some of those involved in political life, manipulated from abroad, are trying desperately to hoodwink national and international public opinion by saying that the Government are responsible for delaying the votes. We reiterate the commitment of the Head of State and invite all those who wish to do so, to come to Chad and observe the various election processes.

I should like to extend our thanks to the United Nations, which has already given us technical assistance. I also take this opportunity to appeal to countries and international organizations to help us properly to organize the elections.

Because of the tumultuous history of my country, peace and stability are constant concerns of my Government, which seeks only to make a reality of the legitimate aspirations of the Chadian people to economic and social well-being.

National reconciliation was rightly one of the main recommendations of the Sovereign National Conference, for trust and harmony among the people of Chad must be rebuilt. The establishment of a national reconciliation commission and the proclamation of a general amnesty and a unilateral cease-fire throughout the country are demonstrations of the avowed will of the Government to reunite Chadians. Some people in Chadian political life consider that the final step in achieving this objective is to organize a round table. The Government is in favour, as long as the other participants are not limited to the armed opposition and as long as it does not threaten the achievements of the Sovereign National Conference, the democratic process, or the established timetable.

Political freedom is truly beneficial only when it is based on an economic situation from which all the population gain. My country faces an economic and financial crisis due to external factors, aggravated by desertification, an uncertain climate and the fact that it is land-locked. My Government has taken a series of measures to improve the financial situation, while strengthening its control over debt servicing and trying to exert similar control over the civil service and the army. These measures have had satisfactory results and should be supported by our partners.

While we are pleased that the cold war has ended, there remain, as I said earlier, many matters causing great concern. The international community is confronting some problems that negatively impact on the evolution of our countries and require collective thought.

With regard to peace, since the last session the picture has continued to be one of contrasts.

In Angola, my Government is heartened by the progress achieved since the Lusaka Accords, which have opened up great prospects for the consolidation of peace and the reconstruction of the country.

Similarly, we welcome the signing in Washington on 28 September of the agreement between the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. This is an important milestone on the path towards a just and lasting settlement of the crisis, which has lasted far too long.

My country also welcomed the agreements reached by the Liberian factions on 19 August. With the setting up of the Council of State, we can hope that the six years of nightmare are now coming to an end for the people of Liberia.

Elsewhere, the situation is much less favourable. Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia and Sierra Leone are still powder kegs, experiencing loss of human life and massive displacements of populations.

My country is also concerned about the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the very heartland of Europe, where the spiral of war seems to hold sway over the logic of peace. We encourage the patient and tireless efforts of the international community to settle this conflict, with respect for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We would make an urgent appeal to the various protagonists to demonstrate perspicacity and political courage in order to put an end to these human tragedies.

Foreseeable causes of conflict in most States are behaviour and attitudes revealing a desire for hegemony that threatens territorial integrity and harms good-neighbourly relations. We must appeal to leaders to show wisdom and refrain from such conduct; rather, they should work together in a spirit of solidarity and mutual assistance to implement joint development programmes.

For its part, Chad fully supports the principle of the peaceful settlement of all disputes. In this spirit, on the basis of resolutions of the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, we again appeal for the lifting of the embargo on the Libyan people, which has a negative impact on neighbouring countries.

My country supports the efforts under way in our Organization in the field of peace-keeping operations, particularly in the consolidation of peace in various parts of the world. Thus, it is making its modest contribution to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda.In the same spirit, Chad supports Argentina's "White Helmets" initiative.

Africa, for its part, took a decisive step by establishing, in 1993, a mechanism for the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts; it is already operational. We call for close cooperation between the United Nations and this mechanism under Chapter VIII of the Charter and for multifaceted support from the entire international community.

As a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, my country welcomes its indefinite extension. This is a major step, because, since the establishment of the United Nations, the prevention of the dissemination of nuclear weapons has been one of the major goals of Member States. Chad fully supports the negotiations currently under way in the Conference on Disarmament for the conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

My country welcomed the Secretary-General's convening of an international meeting on mine clearance from 5 to 7 July 1995 at Geneva. We greatly appreciate the positive reaction of the international community, which, by announcing a contribution of more than $20 million, demonstrated its determination to struggle against this invisible, pernicious and constant menace.

Chad, a large part — about one third — of whose territory is infested with mines of all types, supports the Secretary-General's statement that, by damaging local communities, by contributing to emptying vast territories of their population and by preventing the return of refugees, mines are obstacles to economic and social development. Hence, we appeal to the international community to help my country rid itself of these death machines.

The unbearable pictures of thousands of mutilated men, women and children throughout the world cry out to us. That is why my country stands ready to support any measure that would lead to the total prohibition of the production and sale of such weapons.

Peace and development are the major objectives of our Organization. So far as economic and social development is concerned, in recent years many summits and conferences have been held with the goal of improving the living standards of peoples. But the results have not met the expectations. In fact, as the *Human Development Report 1995* states,

> "More than three-fourths of the world's people live in developing countries, but they enjoy only 16 per cent of the world's income." *(Human Development Report 1995, p. 14)*

Africa, where the majority of the least developed countries are located, is in a most precarious situation. The continual decline in export income condemns Africa to such an increase in the servicing of its debt that any development activity is futile.

What can one say about structural adjustment and economic liberalization measures, which frequently have a negative impact on the most vulnerable segments of our society? Most of the initiatives to promote the development of Africa in the 1990s have not brought the hoped-for results.

We venture to hope that the Agenda for Development, as a prop for the Agenda for Peace, will foster a genuine spirit of solidarity and partnership in the international community.

We believe that, 50 years after its creation, and despite the outstanding results it has achieved in some areas, the United Nations must continue to change in order to meet new and increasingly complex challenges.

In this connection, we reiterate our support for the process of restructuring and revitalizing the United Nations in the economic, social and related areas. We emphasize, however, that this necessary action must not lead to marginalization of the developing countries.

Chad has already expressed its position on the expansion of the Security Council, the organ with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The principle of equitable geographical representation must be observed.

In conclusion, I should like to express the hope that our deliberations will be fully successful and that the twenty-first century will witness the beginning of a genuine rebirth of our international Organization, so that it can work decisively towards the greatness of mankind.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.